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April 12, 1881.

NO. 74. VOL. III. PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS, 98 WILLIAM ST., N. Y. PRICE, 5 CENTS.



"CREEPING UP BEHIND HER LOVER, CECIL GAZED OVER HIS SHOULDER AT THE LETTER HE WAS READING."

## Cecil Castlemaine's Gage; OR, The Story of a Broidered Shield.

BY OUIDA.

### CHAPTER I.

CECIL CASTLEMAINE was the beauty of her county and her line, the handsomest of all the handsome women that had graced her race, when she moved a century and a half ago down the stately staircase, and through the gilded and tapestried halls of Lilliesford. The town had run mad after her, and her face leveled politics, and was cited as admiringly by the Whigs of St. James as by the Tories at the Cocoa-tree, by the beaux and Mohocks at Garraway's as by the alumni at the Grecian, by the wits at Will's as by the fops at Ozinda's.

Wherever she went, whether to the Haymarket or the Opera, to the

'Change for a fan or the palace for a State ball, to Drury Lane to see Pastoral Philips' dreary dilution of Racine, or to some fair chief of her faction for basset and ombre, she was surrounded by the best men of her time, and hated by Whig beauties with virulent wrath, for she was a Tory to the backbone, indeed a Jacobite at heart; worshiped Bolingbroke, detested Marlborough and Eugene, believed in all the horrors of the programme said to have been plotted by the Whigs for the anniversary show of 1711, and was thought to have prompted the satire on those fair politicians who are disguised as *Rosalinda* and *Nigranilla* in the eighty-first paper of the *Spectator*.

Cecil Castlemaine was the greatest beauty of her day, lovelier still at four-and-twenty than she had been at seventeen, unwedded, though the highest coronets in the land had been offered to her; far above the coquetteries and minauderies of her friends, far above imitation of the affectations of "Lady Betty Modley's skuttle," or need of practicing

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It was said in the town that a portly divine, who wore his scarf as one of the chaplains to the Earl of Castlemaine, had prattled somewhat indiscreetly at Child's of his patron's politics; that certain cipher letters had passed the Channel inclosed in chocolate cakes as soon as French goods were again imported after the peace of Utrecht; that gentlemen in high places were strongly suspected of mischievous designs against the tranquility of the country and government; that the Earl had, among others, received a friendly hint from a relative in power to absent himself for a while from the court where he was not best trusted, and the town where an incautious word might be picked up and lead to Tower Hill, and amuse himself at his goodly castle of Lilliesford, where the red deer would not spy upon him, and the dark beechwoods would tell no tales. And the ladies of quality, her dear friends and sisters, were glad when they heard it as they punted at basset and fluttered their fans complacently. They would have the field for themselves, for a season, while Cecil Castlemaine was immured in her manor of Lilliesford; would be free of her beauty to eclipse them at the next birthday, be quit of their most dreaded rival, their most omnipotent leader of fashion; and they rejoiced at the whisper of the cipher letter, the damaging gossipry of the Whig coffee-houses, the bad repute into which my Lord Earl had grown at St. James's, at the misfortune of their friend—in a word, as human nature, masculine or feminine, will ever do—to its shame be it spoken—unless the *fomes peccati* be more completely wrung out of it than it ever has been since the angel Gabriel performed that work of purification on the infant Mahomet.

It was the June of the year '15, and the coming disaffection was seething and boiling secretly among the Tories; the impeachment of Ormond and Bolingbroke had strengthened the distaste to the new-come Hanoverian pack, their attainder had been the blast of air needed to excite the smoldering wood to flame, the gentlemen of that party in the South began to grow impatient of the intrusion of the distant German branch, to think lovingly of the old legitimate line, and to feel something of the chafing irritation of the gentlemen of the North, who were fretting like stag-hounds held in leash.

Envoyes passed to and fro between St. Germain, and Jacobite nobles, priests of the church who had fallen out of favor and were typified as the Scarlet Woman by a rival who, though successful, was still bitter, plotted with ecclesiastical relish in the task; letters were conveyed in rolls of innocent lace, plans were forwarded in frosted confections, messages were passed in invisible cipher that defied investigation. The times were dangerous; full of plot and counterplot, of risk and danger, of fomenting projects and hidden disaffection—times in which men, living habitually over mines, learned to like the uncertainty, and to think life flavorless without the chance of losing it any hour; and things being in this state, the Earl of Castlemaine deemed it prudent to take the counsel of his friend in power, and retire from London for a while, perhaps for the safety of his own person, perhaps for the advancement of his cause, either of

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It was the June of the year '15, and the coming disaffection was seething and boiling secretly among the Tories; the impeachment of Ormond and Bolingbroke had strengthened the distaste to the new-come Hanoverian pack, their attainder had been the blast of air needed to excite the smoldering wood to flame, the gentlemen of that party in the South began to grow impatient of the intrusion of the distant German branch, to think lovingly of the old legitimate line, and to feel something of the chafing irritation of the gentlemen of the North, who were fretting like stag-hounds held in leash.

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the Fan exercise; haughty, peerless, radiant, unwon—nay, more—untouched; for the finest gentleman on the town could not flatter himself that he had ever stirred the slightest trace of interest in her, nor boast, as he stood in the inner circle at the Chocolate-house (unless, indeed, he lied more impudently than Tom Wharton himself), that he had ever been honored by a glance of encouragement from the Earl's daughter. She was too proud to cheapen herself with coquetry, too fastidious to care for her conquests over those who whispered to her through Nicolini's song, vied to have the privilege of carrying her fan, drove past her windows in Soho Square, crowded about her in St. James's Park, paid court even to her little spaniel Indamara, and to catch but a glimpse of her brocaded train as it swept a ball-room floor, would leave even their play at the Groom Porter's, Mrs. Oldfield in the green room, a night hunt with Mohun and their brother Mohocks, a circle of wits gathered "within the steam of the coffee-pot" at Will's, a dinner at Halifax's, a supper at Bolingbroke's—whatever, according to their several tastes, made their best entertainment and was hardest to quit.

The highest suitors of the day sought her smile and sued for her hand; men left the Court and the Mall to join the Flanders army before the lines at Bouchain less for loyal love of England than hopeless love of Cecil Castlemaine. Her father vainly urged her not to fling away offers that all the women at St. James's envied her. She was untouched and unwon, and when her friends, the court beauties, the fine ladies, the coquettes of quality, rallied her on her coldness (envying her her conquests), she would smile her slight proud smile and bow her stately head. "Perhaps she was cold; she might be; they were *personnable* men? Oh yes! she had nothing to say against them. His Grace of Belamour?—a pretty wit, without doubt. Lord Millamont?—Diverting, but a coxcomb. He had beautiful hands; it was a pity he was always thinking of them! Sir Gage Rivers?—As obsequious a lover as the man in the 'Way of the World,' but she had heard he was very boastful and facetious at women over his chocolate at Ozinda's. The Earl of Argent? A gallant soldier, surely, but whatever he might protest, no mistress would ever rival with him the dice at the Groom Porter's. Lord Philip Bellairs? A proper gentleman; no fault in him; a *bel esprit* and an elegant courtier; pleased many, no doubt, but he did not please her overmuch. Perhaps her taste was too fanical, or her character too cold, as they said. She preferred it should be so. When you were content it were folly to seek a change. For her part, she failed to comprehend how women could stoop to flutter their fans and choose their ribbons, and rack their tirewoman's brains for new pulvillios, and lappets, and devices, and practice their curtsy and recovery before their pier-glass, for no better aim or stake than to draw the glance and win the praise of men for whom they cared nothing. A woman who had the eloquence of beauty and a true pride should be above heed for such affectations, pleasure in such applause!"

So she would put them all aside and turn the tables on her friends, and go on her own way, proud, peerless Cecil Castlemaine, conquering and unconquered; and Steele must have had her name in his thoughts, and honored it heartily and sincerely, when he wrote one Tuesday, on the 21st of October, under the domino of his Church Coquette, "I say I do honor to those who *can be coquettes and are not such*, but I despise all who would be so, and, in despair of arriving at it themselves, hate and vilify all those who *can*." A definition justly drawn by his keen, quick graver, though doubtless it only excited the ire of, and was entirely lost upon, those who read the paper over their dish of bohea, or over their toilette, while they shifted a patch for an hour before they could determine it, or regretted the loss of ten guineas at crimp.

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in the still-room; as little was she able, like many fine ladies when in similar exile, to while it away by scolding her tiring-woman, and sorting a suit of ribbons, in ordering a set of gilded leather hangings from Chelsea for the state chambers, and yawning over chocolate in her bed till mid-day. She regretted leaving the Town, not for Belamour, nor Argent, nor any of those who vainly hoped, as they glanced at the little mirror in the lids of their snuff-boxes, that they might have graven themselves were it ever so faintly, in her thoughts; but for the wits, the pleasures, the choice clique, the accustomed circle to which she was so used, the courtly, brilliant town-life where she was wont to reign.

So she stood on the terrace the first morning of her exile, her thoughts far away, with the loyal gentlemen of the North, and the banished court at St. Germain, the lids drooping proudly over her haughty eyes, and her lips half parted with a faint smile of triumph in the visions limned by ambition and imagination, while the wind softly stirred the rich lace of her bodice, and her fingers lay lightly, yet firmly, on the head of her stag-hound. She looked up at last as she heard the ring of a horse's hoofs, and saw a sorrel, covered with dust and foam, spurred up the avenue, which, rounding past the terrace, swept on to the front entrance; the sorrel looked wellnigh spent, and his rider somewhat worn and languid, as a man might do with justice who had been in boot and saddle twenty-four hours at the stretch, scarce stopping for a stoup of wine; but he lifted his hat, and bowed down to his saddle-bow as he passed her.

"Was it the long-looked-for messenger with definite news from St. Germain?" wondered Lady Cecil, as her hound gave out a deep-tongued bay of anger at the stranger. She went back into her bower-room, and toyed absently with her flowered handkerchief, broidering a stalk to a violet-leaf, and wondering what additional hope the horseman might have brought to strengthen the good Cause, till her servants brought word that his Lordship prayed the pleasure of her presence in the octagon-room. Whereat she rose, and swept through the long corridors, entered the octagon-room, the sunbeams gathering about her rich dress as they passed through the stained-glass oriels, and saluted the new-comer, when her father presented him to her as their trusty and welcome friend and envoy, Sir Fulke Ravensworth, with her careless dignity and queenly grace, that nameless air which was too highly bred to be condescension, but markedly and proudly repelled familiarity, and signed a pale of distance beyond which none must intrude.

The new-comer was a tall and handsome man, of noble presence, bronzed by foreign suns, pale and jaded just now with hard riding, while his dark silver-laced suit was splashed and covered with dust; but as he bowed low to her, critical Cecil Castlemaine saw that not Belamour himself could have better grace, not my Lord Millamont courtlier mien or whiter hands, and listened with gracious air to what her father unfolded to her of his mission from St. Germain, whither he had come, at great personal risk, in many disguises, and at breathless speed, to place in their hands a precious letter in cypher from James Stuart to his well-beloved and loyal subject Herbert George, Earl of Castlemaine. A letter spoken of with closed doors and in low whispers, loyal as was the household, supreme as the Earl ruled over his domains of Lilliesford, for these were times when men mistrusted those of their own blood, and when the very figures on the tapestry seemed instinct with life to spy and betray—when they almost feared the silk that tied a missive should babble of its contents, and the hound that slept beside them should read and tell their thoughts.

To leave Lilliesford would be danger to the Envoy and danger to the Cause; to stay as guest was to disarm suspicion. The messenger who had brought such priceless news must rest within the shelter of his roof; too much were risked by returning to the French coast yet a while, or even by joining Mar or Derwentwater, so the Earl enforced his will upon the Envoy, and the Envoy thanked him and accepted.

Perchance the beauty, whose eyes he had seen lighten and proud brow flush as she read the royal greeting and

which were easier insured at his seat in the western counties than amidst the Whigs of the capital.

The castle of Lilliesford was bowered in the thick woods of the western counties, a giant pile built by Norman masons. Troops of deer herded under the gold-green beechen boughs, the sunlight glistened through the aisles of the trees, and quivered down on to the thick moss, and ferns, and tangled grass that grew under the park woodlands; the water-lilies clustered on the river, and the swans "floated double, swan and shadow," under the leaves that swept into the water; then, when Cecil Castlemaine came down to share her father's retirement, as now, when her name and titles on the gold plate of a coffin that lies with others of her race in the mausoleum across the park, where winter snows and summer sun-rays are alike to those who sleep within, is all that tells at Lilliesford of the loveliest woman of her time who once reigned there as mistress.

The country was in its glad green midsummer beauty, and the musk-rosebuds bloomed in profuse luxuriance over the chill marble of the terraces, and scattered their delicate odorous petals in fragrant showers on the sward of the lawns, when Cecil Castlemaine came down to what she termed her exile. The morning was fair and cloudless, its sunbeams piercing through the darkest glades in the woodlands, the thickest shroud of the ivy, the deepest-hued pane of the mullioned windows, as she passed down the great staircase where lords and gentlewomen of her race gazed on her from the canvas of Lely and Jamesone, Bourdain and Vandyke, crossed the hall with her dainty step, so stately yet so light, and standing by the window of her own bower-room, was lured out on to the terrace overlooking the west side of the park.

She made such a picture as Vandyke would have liked to paint, with her golden glow upon her, and the musk-roses clustering about her round the pilasters of marble—the white, chill marble to which Belamour and many other of her lovers of the court and town had often likened her. Vandyke would have lingered lovingly on the hand that rested on her stag-hound's head, would have caught her air of court-like grace and dignity, would have painted with delighted fidelity her deep azure eyes, her proud brow, her delicate lips arched haughtily like a cupid's bow, would have picked out every fold of her sweeping train, every play of light on her silken skirts, every dainty tracery of her point-lace. Yet even painted by Sir Anthony, that perfect master of art and elegance, though more finished, it could have hardly been more faithful, more instinct with grace, and life, and dignity, than a sketch drawn of her shortly after that time by one who loved her well, which is still hanging in the gallery at Lilliesford, lighted up by the afternoon sun when it streams in through the western windows.

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Who was there for miles around with whom she could stoop to associate, with whom she cared to exchange a word? Madam from the vicarage, in her grogram, learned in syrups, slaves, and possets? Country Lady Bountifuls, with gossip of the village and the poultry-yard? Provincial Peeresses, who had never been to London since Queen Anne's coronation? A squirearchy, who knew of no music save the concert of the stop-hounds, no court save the court of the county assize, no literature unless by miracle 't were Tarleton's Jests? None such as these could cross the inlaid oak parquet of Lilliesford, and be ushered into the presence of Cecil Castlemaine.

So the presence of the Chevalier's messenger was not altogether unwelcome and distasteful to her. She saw him but little, merely conversing at table with him with that distant and dignified courtesy which marked her out from the light, free, inconsequent manners in vogue with other women of quality of her time; the air which had chilled half the softest things even on Belamour's lips, and kept the vainest coxcomb hesitating and abashed.

But by degrees she observed that the Envoy was a man who had lived in many countries and in many courts, was well versed in the tongues of France and Italy and Spain—in their belles-lettres, too, moreover—and had served his apprenticeship to good company in the salons at Versailles, in the audience-room of the Vatican, at the receptions of the Duchess du Maine, and with the banished family at St. Germain. He spoke with a high and sanguine spirit of the troublous times approaching and the beloved Cause whose crisis was at hand, which chimed in with her humor better than the flippancies of Belamour, the airy nothings of Millamont. He was but a soldier of fortune, a poor gentleman who, named to her in the town, would have had never a word, and would have been unnoticed amidst the crowding beaux who clustered round to hold her fan and hear how she had been pleased with the drolleries of *Grief a la Mode*. But down in the western counties she deigned to listen to the Prince's officer, to smile—a smile beautiful when it came on her proud lips, as the play of light on the opals of her jeweled stomacher—nay, even to be amused when he spoke of the women of foreign courts, to be interested when he told which was but reluctantly, of his own perils, escapes, and adventures, to discourse with him, riding home under the beech avenues from hawking, or standing on the western terrace at curfew to watch the sunset, of many things on

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On the whole, through these long midsummer days, Lady Cecil found the Envoy from St. Germain a companion that did not suit her ill, sought less the solitude of her bower-room, and listened graciously to him in the long twilight hours, while the evening dews gathered in the cups of the musk-roses, and the star-rays began to quiver on the water-lilies floating on the river below, that murmured along, with endless song, under the beechen-boughs. A certain softness stole over her, relaxing the cold hauteur of which Belamour had so often complained, giving a nameless charm, supplying a nameless something, lacking before, in the beauty of The Castlemaine.

She would stroke, half sadly, the smooth feathers of her tartaret falcon Gabrielle when Fulke Ravensworth brought her the bird from the ostreger's wrist, with its azure velvet hood, and silver bells and jesses. She would wonder, as she glanced through Corneille or Congreve, Philips or Petrarca, what it was, this passion of love, of which they all treated, on which they all turned, no matter how different their strain. And now and then would come over her cheek and brow a faint fitful wavering flush, delicate and changing as the flush from the rose-hued reflections of western clouds on a statue of Pharos marble, and then she would start and rouse herself, and wonder what she ailed, and grow once more haughty, calm, stately, dazzling, but chill as the Castlemaine diamonds that she wore.

So the summer-time passed, and the autumn came, the corn-lands brown with harvest, the hazel-copse strewn with fallen nuts, the beech-leaves turning into reddened gold. As the wheat ripened but to meet the sickle, as the nuts grew but to fall, as the leaves turned to gold but to wither, so the sanguine hopes, the fond ambitions of men, strengthened and matured only to fade into disappointment and destruction! Four months had sped by since the Prince's messenger had come to Lilliesford—months that had gone swiftly with him as some sweet delicious dream; and the time had come when he had orders to ride north, secretly and swiftly, speak with Mr. Forster and other gentlemen concerned in the meditated rising, and convey despatches and instructions to the Earl of Mar; for Prince James was projecting soon to join his loyal adherents in Scotland, and the critical moment was close at hand, the moment when, to Fulke Ravensworth's high and sanguine courage, victory seemed certain; failure, if no treachery marred, no dissension weakened, impossible; the moment to which he looked for honor, success, distinction, that should give him claim and title to aspire—where? Strong man, cool soldier though he was, he shrank from drawing his fancied future out from the golden haze of immature hope, lest he should see it wither upon

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But by degrees she observed that the Envoy was a man who had lived in many countries and in many courts, was well versed in the tongues of France and Italy and Spain—in their belles-lettres, too, moreover—and had served his apprenticeship to good company in the salons at Versailles, in the audience-room of the Vatican, at the receptions of the Duchess du Maine, and with the banished family at St. Germain. He spoke with a high and sanguine spirit of the troublous times approaching and the beloved Cause whose crisis was at hand, which chimed in with her humor better than the flippancies of Belamour, the airy nothings of Millamont. He was but a soldier of fortune, a poor gentleman who, named to her in the town, would have had never a word, and would have been unnoticed amidst the crowding beaux who clustered round to hold her fan and hear how she had been pleased with the drolleries of *Grief a la Mode*. But down in the western counties she deigned to listen to the Prince's officer, to smile—a smile beautiful when it came on her proud lips, as the play of light on the opals of her jeweled stomacher—nay, even to be amused when he spoke of the women of foreign courts, to be interested when he told which was but reluctantly, of his own perils, escapes, and adventures, to discourse with him, riding home under the beech avenues from hawking, or standing on the western terrace at curfew to watch the sunset, of many things on

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So the summer-time passed, and the autumn came, the corn-lands brown with harvest, the hazel-copse strewn with fallen nuts, the beech-leaves turning into reddened gold. As the wheat ripened but to meet the sickle, as the nuts grew but to fall, as the leaves turned to gold but to wither, so the sanguine hopes, the fond ambitions of men, strengthened and matured only to fade into disappointment and destruction! Four months had sped by since the Prince's messenger had come to Lilliesford—months that had gone swiftly with him as some sweet delicious dream; and the time had come when he had orders to ride north, secretly and swiftly, speak with Mr. Forster and other gentlemen concerned in the meditated rising, and convey despatches and instructions to the Earl of Mar; for Prince James was projecting soon to join his loyal adherents in Scotland, and the critical moment was close at hand, the moment when, to Fulke Ravensworth's high and sanguine courage, victory seemed certain; failure, if no treachery marred, no dissension weakened, impossible; the moment to which he looked for honor, success, distinction, that should give him claim and title to aspire—where? Strong man, cool soldier though he was, he shrank from drawing his fancied future out from the golden haze of immature hope, lest he should see it wither upon

injunction, made a sojourn near her presence not distasteful; perchance he cared little where he stayed till the drawing time of action and of rising should arrive, when he should take the field and fight till life or death for the "White Rose and the long heads of hair." He was a soldier of fortune, a poor gentleman with no patrimony but his name, no chance of distinction save by his sword; sworn to a cause whose star was set forever; for many years his life had been of changing adventure and shifting chances, now fighting with Berwick at Almanza, now risking his life in some delicate and dangerous errand for James Stuart that could not have been trusted so well to any other officer about St. Germain; gallant to rashness, yet with much of the acumen of the diplomatist, he was invaluable to his Court and Cause, but, Stuart-like, mea-like, they hastened to employ, but ever forgot to reward!

Lady Cecil missed her town-life, and did not over-favor her exile in the western counties. To note down on her Mother's tablets the drowsy homilies droned out by the chaplain on a Sabbath noon, to play at crambo, to talk with her tirewomen of new washes for the skin, to pass her hours away in knotting?—she, whom Steele might have writ of when he drew his character of *Eudoxia*, could wile her exile with none of these insanities; neither could she consort with gentry who seemed to her a little better than the boors of a country wake, who had never heard of Mr. Spectator and knew nothing of Mr. Cowley, countrywomen whose ambition was in their cowslip wines, fox-hunters more ignorant and uncouth than the dumb brutes they followed.

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Her hound, asleep beside her, raised his head with a low growl as a step intruded on the sanctity of the bower-room, then composed himself again to slumber, satisfied it was no foe. His mistress turned slowly; she knew the horses waited; she had shunned this ceremony of farewell, and never thought any would be bold enough to venture here without permission sought and gained.

"Lady Cecil, I could not go upon my way without one word of parting. Pardon me if I have been too rash to seek it here."

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"Assuredly I wish you God speed, Sir Fulke, and safe issue from all perils."

He bowed low; then raised himself to his fullest height, and stood beside her, watching the light play upon the opals:

"That is all you vouchsafe me?"

"All? It is as much as you would claim, sir, is it not? It is more than I would say to many."

"Your pardon—it is more than I should claim if prudence were ever by, if reason always ruled! I have no right to ask for, seek for, even wish for, more; such petitions may only be addressed by men of wealth and of high title; a landless soldier should have no pride to sting, no heart to wound; they are the prerogative of a happier fortune."

Her lips turned white, but she answered haughtily; the crimson light flashing in her jewels, heirlooms priceless and hereditary, like her beauty and her pride:

"This is strange language, sir! I fail to apprehend you."

"You have never thought that I ran a danger deadlier than that which I have ever risked on any field? You have never guessed that I have had the madness, the presumption, the crime—it may be in your eyes—to love you."

The color flushed to her face, crimsoning even her brow, and then fled back. Her first instinct was insulted pride—a beggared gentleman, a landless soldier, spoke to her of love!—of love!—which Belamour had barely had courage to whisper of; which none had dared to sue of her in return. He had ventured to feel this for her! he had ventured to speak of this to her!

The Envoy saw the rising resentment, the pride spoken in every line of her delicate face, and stopped her as she would have spoken.

"Wait! I know all you would reply. You think it infinite daring, presumption that merits highest reproof—"

"Since you divined so justly, it were pity you subjected yourself and me to this most useless, most unexpected interview. Why—"

"Why? Because, perchance, in this life you will see my face no more, and you will think gently, mercifully of my offense (if offense it be to love you more than life, and only less than honor), when you know that I have fallen for the Cause, with your name in my heart, held only the dearer because never on my lips! Sincere love can be no insult to

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Cecil Castlemaine stood in the crimson glory of the autumn sunset, her head erect, her pride unshaken, but her heart stirred strangely and unwontedly. It smote the one with bitter pain, to think a penniless exile should thus dare to speak of what princes and dukes had almost feared to whisper; what had she done—what had she said, to give him license for such liberty? It stirred the other with a tremulous warmth, a vague, sweet pleasure, that were never visitants there before; but that she scouted instantly as weakness, folly, debasement, in the Last of the Castlemaines.

He saw well enough what passed within her, what made her eyes so troubled, yet her brow and lips so proudly set, and he bent nearer toward her, the great love that was in him trembling in his voice:

"Lady Cecil, hear me! If in the coming struggle I win distinction, honor, rank—if victory come to us, and the King we serve remember me in his prosperity as he does now in his adversity—if I can meet you hereafter with tidings of triumph and success, my name made one which England breathes with praise and pride, honors gained such as even you will deem worthy of your line—then—then—will you let me speak of what you refuse to hearken to now—then may I come to you, and seek a gentler answer?"

She looked for a moment upon his face, as it bent toward her in the radiance of the sunset light, the hope that hopes all things glistening in his eyes, the high-souled daring of a gallant and sanguine spirit flushing his forehead, the loud throbs of his heart audible in the stillness around; and her proud eyes grew softer, her lips quivered for an instant.

Then she turned toward him with queenly grace:

"Yes!"

It was spoken with stately dignity, though scarce above her breath; but the hue that wavered in her cheek was but the lovelier, for the pride that would not let her eyes droop nor her tears rise, would not let her utter one softer word. That one word cost her much. That single utterance was much from Cecil Castlemaine.

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She bowed her noble head, ever held haughtily, as though every crown of Europe had a right to circle it; his hot lips lingered for a moment on her hand; then Cecil Castlemaine stood alone in the window of her bower-room, her hand pressed again upon the opals under which her heart was heating with a dull, weary pain, looking out over the landscape, where the golden leaves were falling fast, and the river, tossing sadly dead branches on its waves, was bemoaning in plaintive language the summer days gone by.

Two months came and went, the beech boughs, black and sear, creaked in the bleak December winds that sighed through frozen ferns and over the couches of shivering deer, the snow drifted up on the marble terrace, and icelocks clung where the warm rosy petals of the musk rosebuds had nestled. Across the country came terrible whispers that struck the hearts of men of loyal faith to the White Rose with a bolt of ice-cold terror and despair. Messengers riding in hot haste, open-mouthed peasants gossiping by the village forge, horsemen who tarried for a breathless rest at alehouse doors, Whig divines who returned thanks for God's most gracious mercy in vouchsafing victory to the strong, all told the tale, all spread the news of the drawn battle of Sheriff-Muir, of the surrender under Preston walls, of the flight of Prince James. The tidings came one by one to Lilliesford, where my Lord Earl was holding himself in readiness to co-operate with the gentlemen of the North to set up the royal standard, broderied by his daughter's hands, in the western counties, and proclaim James III. "sovereign lord and king of the realms of Great Britain and Ireland."

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The color flushed to her face, crimsoning even her brow, and then fled back. Her first instinct was insulted pride—a beggared gentleman, a landless soldier, spoke to her of love!—of love!—which Belamour had barely had courage to whisper of; which none had dared to sue of her in return. He had ventured to feel this for her! he had ventured to speak of this to her!

The Envoy saw the rising resentment, the pride spoken in every line of her delicate face, and stopped her as she would have spoken.

"Wait! I know all you would reply. You think it infinite daring, presumption that merits highest reproof—"

"Since you divined so justly, it were pity you subjected yourself and me to this most useless, most unexpected interview. Why—"

"Why? Because, perchance, in this life you will see my face no more, and you will think gently, mercifully of my offense (if offense it be to love you more than life, and only less than honor), when you know that I have fallen for the Cause, with your name in my heart, held only the dearer because never on my lips! Sincere love can be no insult to

whomsoever proffered; Elizabeth Stuart saw no shame to her in the devotion of William Craven!"

Cecil Castlemaine stood in the crimson glory of the autumn sunset, her head erect, her pride unshaken, but her heart stirred strangely and unwontedly. It smote the one with bitter pain, to think a penniless exile should thus dare to speak of what princes and dukes had almost feared to whisper; what had she done—what had she said, to give him license for such liberty? It stirred the other with a tremulous warmth, a vague, sweet pleasure, that were never visitants there before; but that she scouted instantly as weakness, folly, debasement, in the Last of the Castlemaines.

He saw well enough what passed within her, what made her eyes so troubled, yet her brow and lips so proudly set, and he bent nearer toward her, the great love that was in him trembling in his voice:

"Lady Cecil, hear me! If in the coming struggle I win distinction, honor, rank—if victory come to us, and the King we serve remember me in his prosperity as he does now in his adversity—if I can meet you hereafter with tidings of triumph and success, my name made one which England breathes with praise and pride, honors gained such as even you will deem worthy of your line—then—then—will you let me speak of what you refuse to hearken to now—then may I come to you, and seek a gentler answer?"

She looked for a moment upon his face, as it bent toward her in the radiance of the sunset light, the hope that hopes all things glistening in his eyes, the high-souled daring of a gallant and sanguine spirit flushing his forehead, the loud throbs of his heart audible in the stillness around; and her proud eyes grew softer, her lips quivered for an instant.

Then she turned toward him with queenly grace:

"Yes!"

It was spoken with stately dignity, though scarce above her breath; but the hue that wavered in her cheek was but the lovelier, for the pride that would not let her eyes droop nor her tears rise, would not let her utter one softer word. That one word cost her much. That single utterance was much from Cecil Castlemaine.

Her handkerchief lay at her feet, a delicate, costly toy of lace, embroidered with her shield and chiffre; he stooped and raised it, and thrust it in his breast to treasure it there.

"If I fail, I send this back in token that I renounce all hope; if I can come to you with honor and with fame, this shall be my gage that I may speak, that you will listen?"

She bowed her noble head, ever held haughtily, as though every crown of Europe had a right to circle it; his hot lips lingered for a moment on her hand; then Cecil Castlemaine stood alone in the window of her bower-room, her hand pressed again upon the opals under which her heart was heating with a dull, weary pain, looking out over the landscape, where the golden leaves were falling fast, and the river, tossing sadly dead branches on its waves, was bemoaning in plaintive language the summer days gone by.

Two months came and went, the beech boughs, black and sear, creaked in the bleak December winds that sighed through frozen ferns and over the couches of shivering deer, the snow drifted up on the marble terrace, and icelocks clung where the warm rosy petals of the musk rosebuds had nestled. Across the country came terrible whispers that struck the hearts of men of loyal faith to the White Rose with a bolt of ice-cold terror and despair. Messengers riding in hot haste, open-mouthed peasants gossiping by the village forge, horsemen who tarried for a breathless rest at alehouse doors, Whig divines who returned thanks for God's most gracious mercy in vouchsafing victory to the strong, all told the tale, all spread the news of the drawn battle of Sheriff-Muir, of the surrender under Preston walls, of the flight of Prince James. The tidings came one by one to Lilliesford, where my Lord Earl was holding himself in readiness to co-operate with the gentlemen of the North to set up the royal standard, broderied by his daughter's hands, in the western counties, and proclaim James III. "sovereign lord and king of the realms of Great Britain and Ireland."

closer sight. He was but a landless adventurer, with nothing but his sword and his honor, and kings he knew were slow to pay back benefits, or recollect the hands that hewed them free passage to their thrones.

Cecil Castlemaine stood within the window of her bower-room, the red light of the October sun glittering on her gold-broidered skirt and her corsage sewn with opals and emeralds; her hand was pressed lightly on her bosom, as though some pain were throbbing there; it was new this unrest, this weariness, this vague weight that hung upon her; it was the perils of their Cause, she told herself; the risks her father ran: it was weak, childish, unworthy a Castlemaine! Still the pain throbbed there.

Her hound, asleep beside her, raised his head with a low growl as a step intruded on the sanctity of the bower-room, then composed himself again to slumber, satisfied it was no foe. His mistress turned slowly; she knew the horses waited; she had shunned this ceremony of farewell, and never thought any would be bold enough to venture here without permission sought and gained.

"Lady Cecil, I could not go upon my way without one word of parting. Pardon me if I have been too rash to seek it here."

Why was it that his brief frank words ever pleased her better than Belamour's most honeyed phrases, Millamont's suavest periods? She scarcely could have told, save that there were in them an earnestness and truth new and rare to her ear and to her heart.

She pressed her hand closer on the opals—the jewels of calamity—and smiled:

"Assuredly I wish you God speed, Sir Fulke, and safe issue from all perils."

He bowed low; then raised himself to his fullest height, and stood beside her, watching the light play upon the opals:

"That is all you vouchsafe me?"

"All? It is as much as you would claim, sir, is it not? It is more than I would say to many."

"Your pardon—it is more than I should claim if prudence were ever by, if reason always ruled! I have no right to ask for, seek for, even wish for, more; such petitions may only be addressed by men of wealth and of high title; a landless soldier should have no pride to sting, no heart to wound; they are the prerogative of a happier fortune."

Her lips turned white, but she answered haughtily; the crimson light flashing in her jewels, heirlooms priceless and hereditary, like her beauty and her pride:

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Perhaps amidst her grief for her Prince and for his cause mingled—as the deadliest thought of all—a memory of a bright proud face, that had bent toward her with tender love and touching grace a month before, and that might now be lying pale and cold, turned upward to the winter stars, on the field of Sheriff-Muir.

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Another summer had dawned, bright and laughing, over England; none the less fair for human lives laid down, for human hopes crushed out; daisies powdering the turf sodden with human blood, birds carolling their song over graves of heaped up dead. The musk-roses tossed their delicate heads again amidst the marble pilasters, and the hawthorn boughs shook their fragrant buds into the river at Lilliesford, the purple hills lay wrapped in sunny mist, and hyacinth bells mingled with the tangled grass and fern under the woodland shades, where the red deer nestled happily. Herons plumed their silvery wings down by the water side, swallows circled in sultry air above the great bell tower, and wood pigeons cooed with soft love notes among the leafy branches. Yet the Countess of Castlemaine, last of her race, sole owner of the lands that spread around her, stood on the rose terrace, finding no joy in the sunlight about her, no melody in the song of the birds.

She was the last of her name; her father, broken-hearted at the news from Dumblain and Preston, had died the very day after his lodgment in the Tower. There was no heir male of his line, and the title had passed to his daughter; there had been thoughts of confiscation and attainder, but others, unknown to her, solicited what she scorned to ask for herself, and the greed of the hungry "Hanoverian pack" spared the lands and the revenues of Lilliesford. In haughty pride, in lonely mourning, the fairest beauty of the Court and Town withdrew again to the solitude of her western counties, and tarried there, dwelling amidst her women and her almost regal household, in the sacred solitude of grief, wherein none might intrude. Proud Cecil Castlemaine was yet prouder than of yore; alone, sorrowing for her ruined Cause and exiled King, she would hold converse with none of those who had had a hand in drawing down the disastrous fate she mourned, and only her staghound could have seen the weariness upon her face when she bent down to him, or Gabrielle the falcon felt her hand tremble when it stroked her folded wings. She stood on the terrace, looking over her spreading lands, not the water-lilies on the river below whiter than her lips, pressed painfully together. Perhaps she repented of certain words, spoken to one whom now she would never again behold—perhaps she thought of that delicate toy that was to have been brought back in victory and hope, that now might lie stained and stiffened with blood next a lifeless heart, for never a word in the twelve months gone by had there come to Lilliesford as tidings of Fulke Ravensworth.

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came a Castlemaine; it would have been weakness to have acted otherwise; what was he—a landless soldier—that he should have dared as he had dared? Yet the sables she wore were not solely for the dead Earl, not solely for the lost Stuarts the hot mists that would blind the eyes of Cecil Castlemaine, as hours swelled to days, and days to months, and she—the flattered beauty of the Court and Town—stayed in self-chosen solitude in her halls of Lilliesford, still unwedded and unwon.

The noon-hours chimed from the bell-tower, and the sunny beauty of the morning but weighed with heavier sadness on her heart; the song of the birds, the busy hum of the gnats, the joyous ring of the silver bell round her pet fawn's neck, as it darted from her side under the drooping boughs—none touched an answering chord of gladness in her. She stood looking over her stretching woodlands in deep thought, so deep that she heard no step over the lawn beneath, nor saw the frightened rush of the deer, as a boy, crouching among the tangled ferns, sprang up from his hiding-place under the beechen branches, and stood on the terrace before her, craving her pardon in childish, yet fearless tones. She turned, bending on him that glance which had made the over-bold glance of princes fall abashed. The boy was but a little tatterdemalion to have ventured thus abruptly into the presence of the Countess of Castlemaine; still it was with some touch of a page's grace that he bowed before her.

"Lady, I crave your pardon, but my master bade me watch for you, though I watched till midnight."

"Your master?"

A flush, warm as that on the leaves of the musk-roses, rose to her face for an instant, then faded as suddenly. The boy did not notice her words, but went on in an eager whisper, glancing anxiously round, as a hare would glance fearing the hunters.

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The scarlet blood flamed in the Countess' blanched fare, she signed him on with impetuous command; she was unused to disobedience, and the child's words cut her to the quick.

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Her pride was dear to her, dearer than aught else; she had spoken as was her right to speak, she had done what be-

came a Castlemaine; it would have been weakness to have acted otherwise; what was he—a landless soldier—that he should have dared as he had dared? Yet the sables she wore were not solely for the dead Earl, not solely for the lost Stuarts the hot mists that would blind the eyes of Cecil Castlemaine, as hours swelled to days, and days to months, and she—the flattered beauty of the Court and Town—stayed in self-chosen solitude in her halls of Lilliesford, still unwedded and unwon.

The noon-hours chimed from the bell-tower, and the sunny beauty of the morning but weighed with heavier sadness on her heart; the song of the birds, the busy hum of the gnats, the joyous ring of the silver bell round her pet fawn's neck, as it darted from her side under the drooping boughs—none touched an answering chord of gladness in her. She stood looking over her stretching woodlands in deep thought, so deep that she heard no step over the lawn beneath, nor saw the frightened rush of the deer, as a boy, crouching among the tangled ferns, sprang up from his hiding-place under the beechen branches, and stood on the terrace before her, craving her pardon in childish, yet fearless tones. She turned, bending on him that glance which had made the over-bold glance of princes fall abashed. The boy was but a little tatterdemalion to have ventured thus abruptly into the presence of the Countess of Castlemaine; still it was with some touch of a page's grace that he bowed before her.

"Lady, I crave your pardon, but my master bade me watch for you, though I watched till midnight."

"Your master?"

A flush, warm as that on the leaves of the musk-roses, rose to her face for an instant, then faded as suddenly. The boy did not notice her words, but went on in an eager whisper, glancing anxiously round, as a hare would glance fearing the hunters.

"And told me when I saw you not to speak his name, but only to give you this as his gage, that though all else is lost he has not forgot *his* honor nor *your* will."

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"Child! answer me at your peril! Tell me of him whom you call your master. Tell me all—quick—quick!"

"You are his friend?"

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The scarlet blood flamed in the Countess' blanched fare, she signed him on with impetuous command; she was unused to disobedience, and the child's words cut her to the quick.

"Sir Fulke sails for the French coast to-morrow night," the boy went on, in tremulous haste. "He was left for dead—our men ran one way, and Argyll's men the other—on the field of Sheriff-Muir; and sure if he had not been strong indeed, he would have died that awful night, untended, on the bleak moor, with the winds rearing round him, and his life ebbing away. He was not one of those who fled; you know that of him if you know aught. We got him away before dawn, Donald and I, and hid him in a shieling; he was in the fever then, and knew nothing that was done to him, only he kept that bit of lace in his hand for weeks and weeks, and would not let us stir it from his grasp. What magic there was in it we wondered often, but 'twas a magic, mayhap, that got him well at last; it was an even chance but that he'd died, God bless him! though we did what best we could. We've been wandering in the Highlands all the year, hiding here and tarrying there. Sir Fulke

The tidings came to Lilliesford, and Cecil Castlemaine clenched her white jeweled hands in passionate anguish that a Stuart should have fled before the traitor of Argyll, instead of dying with his face toward the rebel crew; that men had lived who could choose surrender instead of heroic death; that *she* had not been there, at Preston, to shame them with a woman's reading of courage and of loyalty, and show them how to fall with a doomed city rather than yield captive to a foe!

Perhaps amidst her grief for her Prince and for his cause mingled—as the deadliest thought of all—a memory of a bright proud face, that had bent toward her with tender love and touching grace a month before, and that might now be lying pale and cold, turned upward to the winter stars, on the field of Sheriff-Muir.

A year rolled by. Twelve months had fled since the gilded carriage of the Castlemaines, with the lordly blazonment upon its panels, its princely retinue and stately pomp, had come down into the western counties. The bones were crumbling white in the coffins in the Tower, and the skulls over Temple Bar had bleached white in winter snows and springtide suns; Kenmuir had gone to a sleep that knew no wakening, and Derwentwater had laid his fair young head down for a thankless cause; the heather bloomed over the mounds of dead on the plains of Sheriff-Muir, and the yellow gorse blossomed under the city walls of Preston.

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Cecil Castlemaine let up her hold upon the boy, and her hand closed convulsively upon the dainty handkerchief—her gage sent so faithfully back to her!

The child looked upon her face; perchance, in his master's delirium, he had caught some knowledge of the story that hung that broidered toy.

"If you are his friend, madame, doubtless you have some last word to send him?"

Cecil Castlemaine, whom nothing moved, whom nothing softened, bowed her head at the simple question, her heart wrestling sorely, her lips set together in unswerving pride, a mist before her haughty eyes, the broidered shield upon her handkerchief—the shield of her stately and unyielding race—pressed close against her breast.

"You have no word for him, lady?"

Her lips parted; she signed him away. Was this child to see her yielding to such weakness? Had she, Countess of Castlemaine, no better pride, no better strength, no better power of resolve, than this?

The boy lingered.

"I will tell Sir Fulke then, lady, that the ruined have no friends?"

Whiter and prouder still grew the delicate beauty of her face; she raised her stately head, haughtily as she had used to glance over a glittering Court, where each voice murmured praise of her loveliness and reproach of her coldness; and placed the fragile toy of lace back in the boy's hands.

"Go, seek your master, and give him this in gage that their calamity makes friends more dear to us than their success. Go, he will know its meaning!"

In place of the noon chimes the curfew was ringing from the bell-tower, the swallows were gone to roost amidst the ivy, and the herons slept with their heads under their silvery wings among the rushes by the riverside, the ferns and wild hyacinths were damp with evening dew, and the summer starlight glistened amidst the quivering woodland leaves. There was the silence of coming night over the vast forest glades, and no sound broke the stillness, save the song of the grasshopper stirring the tangled grasses, or the sweet low sigh of the west wind fanning the bells of the flowers. Cecil Castlemaine stood once more on the rose-terrace, shrouded in the dense twilight shade flung from above by the beech-boughs, waiting, listening, catching every rustle of the leaves, every tremor of the heads of the roses, yet hearing nothing in the stillness around but the quick, uncertain throbs of her heart beating like the wing of a caged bird under its costly lace. Pride was forgotten at length, and she only remembered—fear and love.

In the silence and the solitude came a step that she knew, came a presence that she felt. She bowed her head upon her hands; it was new to her this weakness, this terror, this anguish of joy; she sought to calm herself, to steel herself, to summon back her pride, her strength; she scorned herself for it all!

His hand touched her, his voice fell on her ear once more, eager, breathless, broken.

"Cecil! Cecil! is this true? Is my ruin thrice blessed, or am I mad and dream of heaven?"

She lifted her head and looked at him with her old proud glance, her lips trembling with words that all her pride could not summon into speech; then her eyes filled with warm, blinding tears, and softened to new beauty—scarce louder than the sigh of the wind among the flower-bells came her words to Fulke Ravensworth's ear, as her royal head bowed on his breast.

"Stay, stay! Or, if you fly, your exile shall be my exile, your danger my danger!"

The kerchief is a treasured heirloom to her descendants now, and fair women of her race who inherit from her her azure eyes and her queenly grace, will recall how the proudest Countess of their Line loved a ruined gentleman so well that she was wedded to him at even, in her private chapel, at the hour of his greatest peril, his lowest fortune, and went with him across the seas till friendly intercession in high places gained them royal permission to dwell again at Lilliesford unmolested. And how it was ever noticeable to those who murmured at her coldness and her pride, that Cecil Castlemaine, cold and negligent as of yore to all the world beside, would seek her husband's smile, and love to meet his eyes, and cherish her beauty for his sake, and be restless in his absence, even for the short span of a day, with a softer and more clinging tenderness than was found in many weaker, many humbler women.

They are gone now the men and women of that generation, and their voices came only to us through the faint echo of their written words. In summer nights the old beech trees toss their leaves in the silvery light of the stars, and the river flows on unchanged, with the ceaseless, mournful burden of its mystic song, the same now as in mid-summer of a century and a half ago. The cobweb handkerchief lies before me with its broidered shield; the same now as long years since, when it was treasured close in a soldier's breast, and held by him dearer than all save his liquor and his word. So things pulseless and passionless endure, and human life passes away as swiftly as a song dies off from the air—as quickly succeeded, and as quickly forgot! Ronsard's refrain is the refrain of our lives:

Le temps s'en va, le temps s'en va, ma dame!  
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### LITTLE GRAND AND THE MARCHIONESS;

### OR, OUR MALTESE PEERAGE.

ALL first things are voted the best; first kisses, first *toga virilis*, first hair of the first whisker; first speeches are often so superior that members subside after making them, fearful of eclipsing themselves; first money won at play must always be the best, as it is always the dearest bought; and first wives are always so super-excellent, that, if a man lose one, he is generally as fearful of hazarding the second as a trout of biting twice.

But of all first things commend me to one's first uniform. No matter that we get sick of harness, and get into mutti as soon as we can now; there is no more exquisite pleasure than the first sight of one's self in shako and sabrestache. How we survey ourselves in the glass, and ring for hot water, that the handsome housemaid may see us in all our glory, and lounge accidentally into our sister's schoolroom, that the governess, who is nice looking and rather flirty, may go down on the spot before us and our scarlet and gold, chains and buttons! One's first uniform! Oh! the exquisite sensation locked up for us in that first box from Sagnarelli, or Bond street!

I remember my first uniform. I was eighteen—as raw a young cub as you could want to see. I had not been licked into shape by a public school, whose tongue may be rough, but cleans off grievances and nonsense better than anything else. I had been in that hotbed of effeminacy, Church principles and weak tea, a Private Tutor's, where mamma's darlings are wrapped up, and stuffed with a little Terence and Horace to show grand at home; and upon my life I do believe my sister Julia, aged thirteen, was more wide awake and up to life than I was, when the governor, an old rector, who always put me in mind of the Vicar of Wakefield, got me gazetted to as crack a corps as any in the Line.

The—th (familiarly known in the Service as the "Dare Devils," from old Peninsular deeds) were just then at Malta,

sets no count upon his life. Sure I think he thanks us little for getting him through the fever of the wounds, but he could not have borne to be pinioned, you know, lady, like a thief, and hung up by the brutes of Whigs, as a butcher hangs sheep in the shambles! The worst of the danger's over—they've had their fill of the slaughter; but we sail to-morrow night for the French coast—England's no place for my master."

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In the silence and the solitude came a step that she knew, came a presence that she felt. She bowed her head upon her hands; it was new to her this weakness, this terror, this anguish of joy; she sought to calm herself, to steel herself, to summon back her pride, her strength; she scorned herself for it all!

His hand touched her, his voice fell on her ear once more, eager, breathless, broken.

"Cecil! Cecil! is this true? Is my ruin thrice blessed, or am I mad and dream of heaven?"

She lifted her head and looked at him with her old proud glance, her lips trembling with words that all her pride could not summon into speech; then her eyes filled with warm, blinding tears, and softened to new beauty—scarce louder than the sigh of the wind among the flower-bells came her words to Fulke Ravensworth's ear, as her royal head bowed on his breast.

"Stay, stay! Or, if you fly, your exile shall be my exile, your danger my danger!"

The kerchief is a treasured heirloom to her descendants now, and fair women of her race who inherit from her her azure eyes and her queenly grace, will recall how the proudest Countess of their Line loved a ruined gentleman so well that she was wedded to him at even, in her private chapel, at the hour of his greatest peril, his lowest fortune, and went with him across the seas till friendly intercession in high places gained them royal permission to dwell again at Lilliesford unmolested. And how it was ever noticeable to those who murmured at her coldness and her pride, that Cecil Castlemaine, cold and negligent as of yore to all the world beside, would seek her husband's smile, and love to meet his eyes, and cherish her beauty for his sake, and be restless in his absence, even for the short span of a day, with a softer and more clinging tenderness than was found in many weaker, many humbler women.

They are gone now the men and women of that generation, and their voices came only to us through the faint echo of their written words. In summer nights the old beech trees toss their leaves in the silvery light of the stars, and the river flows on unchanged, with the ceaseless, mournful burden of its mystic song, the same now as in mid-summer of a century and a half ago. The cobweb handkerchief lies before me with its broidered shield; the same now as long years since, when it was treasured close in a soldier's breast, and held by him dearer than all save his liquor and his word. So things pulseless and passionless endure, and human life passes away as swiftly as a song dies off from the air—as quickly succeeded, and as quickly forgot! Ronsard's refrain is the refrain of our lives:

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### LITTLE GRAND AND THE MARCHIONESS;

### OR, OUR MALTESE PEERAGE.

ALL first things are voted the best; first kisses, first *toga virilis*, first hair of the first whisker; first speeches are often so superior that members subside after making them, fearful of eclipsing themselves; first money won at play must always be the best, as it is always the dearest bought; and first wives are always so super-excellent, that, if a man lose one, he is generally as fearful of hazarding the second as a trout of biting twice.

But of all first things commend me to one's first uniform. No matter that we get sick of harness, and get into mutti as soon as we can now; there is no more exquisite pleasure than the first sight of one's self in shako and sabrestache. How we survey ourselves in the glass, and ring for hot water, that the handsome housemaid may see us in all our glory, and lounge accidentally into our sister's schoolroom, that the governess, who is nice looking and rather flirty, may go down on the spot before us and our scarlet and gold, chains and buttons! One's first uniform! Oh! the exquisite sensation locked up for us in that first box from Sagnarelli, or Bond street!

I remember my first uniform. I was eighteen—as raw a young cub as you could want to see. I had not been licked into shape by a public school, whose tongue may be rough, but cleans off grievances and nonsense better than anything else. I had been in that hotbed of effeminacy, Church principles and weak tea, a Private Tutor's, where mamma's darlings are wrapped up, and stuffed with a little Terence and Horace to show grand at home; and upon my life I do believe my sister Julia, aged thirteen, was more wide awake and up to life than I was, when the governor, an old rector, who always put me in mind of the Vicar of Wakefield, got me gazetted to as crack a corps as any in the Line.

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sets no count upon his life. Sure I think he thanks us little for getting him through the fever of the wounds, but he could not have borne to be pinioned, you know, lady, like a thief, and hung up by the brutes of Whigs, as a butcher hangs sheep in the shambles! The worst of the danger's over—they've had their fill of the slaughter; but we sail to-morrow night for the French coast—England's no place for my master."

Cecil Castlemaine let up her hold upon the boy, and her hand closed convulsively upon the dainty handkerchief—her gage sent so faithfully back to her!

The child looked upon her face; perchance, in his master's delirium, he had caught some knowledge of the story that hung that broidered toy.

"If you are his friend, madame, doubtless you have some last word to send him?"

Cecil Castlemaine, whom nothing moved, whom nothing softened, bowed her head at the simple question, her heart wrestling sorely, her lips set together in unswerving pride, a mist before her haughty eyes, the broidered shield upon her handkerchief—the shield of her stately and unyielding race—pressed close against her breast.

"You have no word for him, lady?"

Her lips parted; she signed him away. Was this child to see her yielding to such weakness? Had she, Countess of Castlemaine, no better pride, no better strength, no better power of resolve, than this?

The boy lingered.

"I will tell Sir Fulke then, lady, that the ruined have no friends?"

Whiter and prouder still grew the delicate beauty of her face; she raised her stately head, haughtily as she had used to glance over a glittering Court, where each voice murmured praise of her loveliness and reproach of her coldness; and placed the fragile toy of lace back in the boy's hands.

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"Precisely, my dear Simon; just what you are!" responded Little Grand, pleasantly. "Bless your heart, I've been engaged to half a dozen women since I joined. A man can hardly help it, you see; they've such a way of drawing you on, you don't like to disappoint them, poor little dears, and so you compromise yourself out of sheer benevolence. There's such a run on a handsome man—it's a great bore. Sometimes I think I shall shave my head, or do something to disfigure myself, as Spurina did. Poor fellow, I feel for him! Well, Simon, you don't seem curious to know who my beauty is?"

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"What, is it somebody you've met at his Excellency's?"

"Wrong again, beloved Simon. It's nobody I've met at

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"Is that an English peerage, Grand?"

"Hum! What! Oh yes, of course! What else should it be, you owl?"

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She listened to us—or rather to him; I was too awestruck to advance much beyond monosyllables—and laughed at him, and smiled encouragingly on my *gaucherie* (and when a boy is *gauche*, how ready he is to worship such a helping hand!), and beamed upon us both with an effulgence compared with which the radiance of Helen, Galatea, Enone, Messalina, Lais, and all the legendary beauties one reads about, must have been what the railway night-lamps that *never* burn are to the prismatic luminaries of Cremorne. They were all uncommonly pleasant, all except the girl who was reading, whom they introduced as the Signorina da' Guari, a Tuscan, and daughter to Orangia Magnolia, with one of those marvelously beautiful faces that one sees in the most splendid painters' models of the Campagna, who never lifted her head scarcely, though Guatamara and Saint-Jeu did their best to make her. But all the others were wonderfully agreeable, and quite *fete'd*. Little Grand and me, at which they being more than double our age, and seemingly a, home alike with Belgravia and Newmarket, the Faubourg and the Pytchley, we felt to grow at least a foot each in the aroma of this Casa di Fiori.

"This is rather stupid, Doxie," began Lord Adolphus, addressing his sister; "not much entertainment for our guests. What do you say to a game of *vingt-et-un*, eh, Mr. Grandison?"

Little Grand fixed his blue eyes on the Marchioness, and said he should be very happy, but as for entertainment—he wanted no other.

"No compliments, *petit ami*," laughed the Marchioness, with a dainty blow of her fan. "Yes, Dolph, have *vingt-et-un*, or music, or anything you like. Sing us something, Lucrezia."

The Italian girl thus addressed looked up with a passion-

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What with the wine, and the smoke, and the smiles, I wasn't quite clear as to whether I saw twenty horses' heads or oae when I was fairly into saddle, and riding back to the town, just as the first dawn was rising, Aphrodite-like, from the far blue waves of the Mediterranean. Little Grand was better seasoned, but even he was dizzy with the parting words of the Marchioness, which had softly breathed the delicious passport, "Come to-morrow."

"By Jupiter!" swore Little Grand, obliged to give relief to his feelings—"by Jupiter, Simon! did you ever see such

a glorious, enchanting, divine, delicious, adorable creature? Faugh! who could look at those Mitchell girls after her? Such eyes! such a smile! such a figure! Talk of a coronet! no imperial crown would be half good enough for her! And how pleasant those fellows are! I like that little chaffy chap, the Duke; what a slap-up story that was about the bal de l'Opera. And Fitzhervey, too; there's something uncommonly thorough-bred about him, ain't there? And Guatamara's an immensely jolly fellow. Ah, my boy! that's something like society; all the ease and freedom of real rank; no nonsense about them, as there is about snobs. I say, what wouldn't the other fellows give to be in our luck? I think even Conran would warm up about her. But, Simon, she's deucedly taken with me—she is, upon my word; and she knows how to show it you, too! By George! one could die for a woman like that—eh?"

"Die!" I echoed, while my horse stumbled along up the hilly road, and I swayed forward, pretty nearly over his head, while poetry rushed to my lips, and electric sparks danced before my eyes:

"To die for those we love! oh, there is power  
In the true heart, and pride, and joy, for this  
It is to live without the vanished light  
That strength is needed!"

"But I'll be shot if it shall be vanished light," returned Little Grand; "it don't look much like it yet. The light's only just lit, 'tisn't likely it's going out again directly; but she is a stunner! and—"

"A stunner!" I shouted; "she's much more than that—she's an angel, and I'll be much obliged to you to call her by her right name, sir. She's a beautiful, noble, loving woman; the most perfect of all Nature's master-works. She is divine, sir, and you and I are not worthy merely to kiss the hem of her garment."

"Ain't we, though? I don't care much about kissing her dress; it's silk, and I don't know that I should derive much pleasure from pressing my lips on its texture; but her cheek—"

"Her cheek is like the Catherine pear,  
The side that's next the sun!"

I shouted, as my horse went down in a rut. She's like Venus rising from the sea-shell; she's like Aurora, when she came down on the first ray of the dawn to Titonus; she's like Briseis—"

"Bother classics! she's like herself, and beats 'em all hollow. She's the finest creature ever seen on earth, and I should like to see the man who'd dare to say she wasn't. And—I say, Simon—how much did you lose to-night?"

From sublimest heights I tumbled straight to bathos. The cold water of Grand's query quenched my poetry, extinguished my electric lights, and sobered me like a douche bath.

"I don't know," I answered, with a sense of awe and horror stealing over me; "but I had a pony in my waistcoat pocket that the governor had just sent me; Guatamara changed it for me, and—I've only sixpence left!"

"Old boy," said Little Grand to me the next morning, after early parade, "come in my room, and let's make up some dispatches to the governors. You see," he continued, five minutes after, "you see, we're both of us pretty well cleared out; I've only got half a pony, and you haven't a couple of fivers left. Now you know they evidently play rather high at the Casa di Fiori; do everything *en prince*, like nobs who've Barclays at their back; and one mustn't hang fire; horrid shabby that would look. Besides, fancy seeming mean before her! So I've been thinking that, though governors are a screwy lot generally, if we put it to 'em clearly the sort of set we've got into, and show 'em that we can't help, now that we are at Rome, doing as the Romans do, I should say they could hardly help bleeding a little—eh? Now, listen how I've put it. My old boy has a weakness for titles; he married my mother on the relationship to Viscount Twaddles (who

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I did fire away: only I, of a more impressionable and poetic nature than Little Grand, gave a certain vent to my feelings in expatiating on the beauty, grace, condescension, etc., etc., of the Marchioness to my mother; I did not mention the grivois stories, the brandy, and the hookah; I was quite sure they were the sign of that delicious ease and disregard of snobbish etiquette and convenances peculiar to the "Upper Ten," but I thought the poor people at home, in vicarage seclusion, would be too out of the world to fully appreciate such revelations of our *creme de la creme*; besides, my governor had James's own detestation of the devine weed, and considered that men who "made chimneys of their mouths" might just as well have the mark of the Beast at once.

Little Grand and I were hard-up for cash, and *en attendant* the governors' replies and remittances, we had recourse to the tender mercies and leather bags of napoleons, ducats, florins, doubloons of a certain Spanish Jew, one Balthazar Miraflores, a shriveled-skinned, weezing old cove, who was "most happy to lent anytink to his tear young shentlesmen, but, by Got! he was as poor as Job, he was indeed!" Whether Job ever lent money out on interest or not, I can't say; perhaps he did, as in the finish he ended with having quadrupled his cattle and lands, and all his goods—a knack usurers preserve in full force to this day; but all I can say is, that if he was not poorer than Mr. Miraflores, he was not much to be pitied, for he, miserly old shark, lived in his dark, dirty hole, like a crocodile embedded in Nile mud, and crushed the bones of all unwary adventurers who came within range of his great bristling jaws.

Money, however, Little Grand and I got out of him in plenty, only for a little bit of paper in exchange; and at that time we didn't know that though the paper tax would be repealed at last, there would remain, as long as youths are green and old birds cunning, a heavy and a bitter tax on certain bits of paper to which one's hand is put, which Mr. Gladstone, though he achieve the herculean task of making draymen take kindly to *vin ordinaire*, and the popping of champagne corks a familiar sound by cottage-hearths, will never be able to include in his budgets, to come among the Taxes that are Repealed!

Well, we had our money from old Balthazar that morning, and we played with it again that night up at the Casa di Fiori. Loo this time, by way of change. Saint-Jeu said he always thought it well to change your game as you change your love; constancy, whether to cards or wo-

men, was most fatiguing. We liked Saint-Jeu very much, we thought him such a funny fellow. They said they did not care to play much—of course they didn't, when Guatamara had had *ecarte* with the Grand Duke of Chaffsandlarkstein at half a million a side, and Lord Dolph had broken the bank at Homburg "just for fun—no fun to old Blanc, who farms it, though, you know." But the Marchioness, who was doubly gracious that night, told them they must play, because it amused her *chers petits amis*. Besides, she said, in her pretty, imperious way, she liked to see it—it amused her. After that, of course, there was no more hesitation; down we sat, and young Heavy-stone with us.

The evening before we had happened to mention him, said he was a fellow of no end of tin, though as stupid an owl as ever spelt his own name wrong when he passed a military examination, and the Marchioness, recalling the name, said she remembered his father, and asked us to bring him to see her; which we did, fearing no rival in "old Heavy."

So down we three sat, and had the evening before over again, with the cards, and the smiles, and wiles of our divinity, and Saint-Jeu's stories and Fitzhervey's cognac and cigars, with this difference, that we found loo more exciting than *vingt-et-un*. They played it so fast, too, it was like a breathless heat for the Goodwood Cup, and the Marchioness watched it, leaning alternately over Grand's, and Heavy's, and my chair, and saying, with such naive delight, "Oh, do take miss, Cosmo; I would risk it if I were you, Mr. Heavy-stone; pray don't let my naughty brother win everything," that I'd have defied the stiffest of the Stagyrites or the chillest of Calvinists to have kept their head cool with that syren voice in their ear.

And La Lucrezia sat, as she had sat the night before, by the open window, still and silent, the Cape jasmines and Southern creepers framing her in a soft moonlight picture, contrast enough to the brilliantly lighted room, echoing with laughter at Saint-Jeu's stories, perfumed with Cubas and narghiles, and shrining the magnificent, full-blown, jeweled beauty of our Marchioness St. Julian, with which we were as rapidly, as madly, as unreasoningly, and as sentimentally in love as any boys of seventeen or eighteen ever could be. What greater latitude, you will exclaim, recalling certain buried-away episodes of *your* hobbedehoyism, when you addressed Latin distichs to that hazel-eyed Hebe who presided over oyster patties and water ices at the pastrycook's in Eton; or, ruined your governor's young plantations, cutting the name of Adeliza Mary, your cousin, at this day a portly person in velvet and point, whom you can now call, with a thanksgiving in the stead of the olden tremor, Mrs. Hector M'Cutchin? Yes, we were in love in a couple of evenings, Little Grand vehemently and unpoetically, I shyly and sentimentally, according to our temperaments, and as the fair Emily stirred feud between the two Noble Kinsmen, so the Marchioness St. Julian began to sow seeds of jealousy and detestation between us, sworn allies as we were. But "*le veritable amant ne connaît point d'amis*" and as soon as we began to grow jealous of each other, Little Grand could have kicked me to the devil, and I could have kicked *him* with the greatest pleasure in life.

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veranda creepers, when I heard somebody say, very softly and low: "Signore, come here a moment."

It was that sweetly pretty mute whom we had barely noticed, absorbed as we were in the worship of our maturer idol, leaning out of the window, her cheeks flushed, her lips parted, her eyes sad and anxious. Of course I went to her, surprised at her waking up so suddenly to any interest in me. She put her hand on my coat sleeve and drew me down toward her.

"Listen to me a moment. I hardly know how to warn you, and yet I must. I cannot sit quietly by and see you and your young friends being deceived as so many have been before you. Do not come here again—do not—"

"Figlia mia! are you not afraid of the night-air?" said the Prince of Orangia Magnolia, just behind us.

His words were kind, but there was a nasty glitter in his eyes. Lucrezia answered him in passionate Italian—of which I had no knowledge—with such fire in her eyes, such haughty gesticulation, and such a torrent of words, that I really began to think, pretty soft little dear as she looked, that she must positively be a trifle out of her mind, her silence before, and her queer speech to me, seemed such odd behavior for a young lady in such high society. She was turning to me again when Little Grand came out into the veranda, looking flushed, proud, and self-complaisant, as such a winner and slayer of women would do. My hand clenched on the jasmine, I thirsted to spring on him as he stood there with his provoking, self-contented smile, and his confounded coxcombical air, and his cursed fair curls—*my* hair was dust-colored and as rebellious as porcupine quills—and wash out in his blood or mine—A touch of a soft hand thrilled through my every nerve and fibre; the Marchioness was there, and signed me to her. Lucrezia, Little Grand, and all the rest of the universe vanished from my mind at the lightning of that angel smile and the rustle of that moire-antique dress. She beckoned me to her into the empty drawing-room.

"Augustus" (I never thought my name could sound so sweet before), "tell me what was my niece Lucrezia saying to you just now?"

Now I had a sad habit of telling the truth; it was an out-of-the-world custom taught me, among other old-fashioned things, at home, though I soon found how inconvenient a *betise* modern society considers it; and I blurted the truth out here, not distinctly or gracefully, though, as Little Grand would have done, for I was in that state of exaltation ordinarily expressed as not knowing whether one is standing in one's Wellingtons or not.

The Marchioness sighed.

"Ah, did she say that? Poor dear girl! She dislikes me so much, it is quite an hallucination, and yet, O Augustus, I have been to her like an elder sister, like a mother. Imagine how it grieves me," and the Marchioness shed some tears—pearls of price, thought I, worthy to drop from angels eyes—"It is a bitter sorrow to me, but, poor darling! she is not responsible."

She touched her veiny temple significantly as she spoke, and I understood, and felt tremendously shocked at it, that the young, fair Italian girl was a fierce and cruel maniac, who had the heart (oh! most extraordinary madness did it seem to me; if *I* had lost my senses I could never have harmed *her*!) to hate, absolutely hate, the noblest, tenderest, most beautiful of women?

"I never alluded to it to any one," continued the Marchioness. "Guatamara and Saint-Jeu, though such intimate friends, are ignorant of it. I would rather have any one think ever so badly of me, than reveal to them the cruel misfortune of my sweet Lucrezia—"

How noble she looked as she spoke!

"But you, Augustus, you," and she smiled upon me till I grew as dizzy as after my first taste of milk-punch, "I have not the courage to let *you* go off with any bad impression of me. I have known you a very little while, it is true—but a few hours, indeed—yet there are affinities of heart and soul

which overstep the bounds of time, and, laughing at the chillies of ordinary custom, make strangers dearer than old friends—"

The room revolved round me, the lights danced up and down, my heart beat like Thor's hammer, and my pulse went as fast as a favorite saving the distance. *She* speaking so to me! My senses whirled round and round like fifty thousand witches on a Walpurgis Night, and down I went on my knees before my magnificent idol, raving away I couldn't tell you what now—the essence of everything I'd ever read, from Ovid to Alexander Smith. It must have been something frightful to hear, though Heaven knows I meant it earnestly enough. Suddenly I was pulled up with a jerk, as one throws an unbroken colt back on his haunches in the middle of his first start. *I thought I heard a laugh.*

She started up too. "Hush! another time! We may be overheard." And drawing her dress from my hands, which grasped it as agonizingly as a cockney grasps his saddle-bow, holding on for dear life over the Burton or Tedworth country, she stooped kindly over me, and floated away before I was recovered from the exquisite delirium of my ecstatic trance.

She loved me! This superb creature loved me! There was not a doubt of it; and how I got back to the barracks that night in my heavenly state of mind I could never have told. All I know is, that Grand and I never spoke a word, by tacit consent, all the way back; that I felt a fiendish delight when I saw his proud triumphant air, and thought how little he guessed, poor fellow!—And that Dream of One Fair Woman was as superior in rapture to the "Dream of Fair Women" as Turkey to the "Fine Fruity Port" that results from damsons and a decocation of sloes!

The next day there was a grand affair in Malta to receive some foreign Prince, whose name I do not remember now, who called on us *en route* to England. Of course all the troops turned out, and there was an inspection of us, and a grand luncheon and dinner, and ball, and all that sort of thing, which a month before I should have considered prime fun, but which now, as it kept me out of my paradise, I thought the most miserable bore that could possibly have chanced.

"I say," said Heavy to me as I was getting into harness—"I say, don't you wonder Fitzhervey and the Marchioness ain't coming to the palace to-day? One would have thought Old Stars and Garters would have been sure to ask them."

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never would, the luncheon was ended, the bigwigs were taking their sieste, or otherwise occupied, and I, trusting to my absence not being noticed, tore off as hard as man can who has Cupid for his Pegasus. With a bouquet as large as a drum-head, clasped round with a bracelet, about which I had many doubts as to the propriety of offering to the possessor of such jewelry as the Marchioness must have, yet on which I thought I might venture after the scene of last night, I was soon on the veranda of the Casa di Fiori, and my natural shyness being stimulated into a distant resemblance of Little Grand's enviable brass, seeing the windows of the drawing-room open, I pushed aside the green venetians and entered noiselessly. The room did not look a quarter so inviting as the night before, though it was left in precisely a similar state. I do not know how it was, but those cards lying about on the floor, those sconces with the wax run down a dripping over them, those emptied caraffes that had diffused an odor not yet dissipated, those tables and velvet couches all *a tort et a travers*, did not look so very inviting after all, and even to my unsophisticated senses, scarcely seemed fit for a Peeress.

There was nobody in the room, and I walked through it toward the boudoir; from the open door I saw Fitzhervey, Guatamara, and my Marchioness—but oh! what horror unutterable! doing—*que pensez-vous?* Drinking bottled porter!—and drinking bottled porter in a *peignoir* not of the cleanliest, and with raven tresses not of the neatest!

Only fancy! she, that divine, *spirituelle* creature, who had talked but a few hours before of the affinity of souls, to have come down, like an ordinary woman, to Guinness's stout, and a checked dressing-gown and unbrushed locks! To find your prophet without his silver veil, or your Leila dead drowned in a sack, or your Guinevere flown over with Sir Lancelot to Boulogne, or your long-esteemed Griselda gone off with your cockaded Jeames, is nothing to the torture, the unutterable anguish, of seeing your angel, your divinity, your bright particular star, your hallowed Arabian rose, come down to—Bottled Porter! Do not talk to me of Dore, sir, or Mr. Martin's pictures; their horrors dwindle into insignificance compared with the horror of finding an intimate liaison between one's first love and Bottled Porter!

In my first dim, unutterable anguish, I should have turned and fled; but my syren's voice had not lost all its power, despite the stout and dirty dressing-gown, for she was a very handsome woman, and could stand such things as well as anybody. She came towards me, with her softest smile, glancing at the bracelet on the bouquet, apologizing slightly for her negligé: "I am so indolent. I only dress for those I care to please—and I never hoped to see you to-day." In short, magnetizing me over again, and smoothing down my outraged sensibilities, till I ended by becoming almost blind (quite I could not manage) to the checked *robe de chambre* and the unbrushed bandeaux, by offering her my bracelet bouquet, which was very graciously accepted, and even by sharing the atrocious London porter, "that horrid stuff," she called it, "how I hate it! but it is the only thing Sir Benjamin Brodie allows me, I am so very delicate, you know, my sensibilities so frightfully acute!"

I had not twenty minutes to stay, having to be back at the barracks, or risk a reprimand, which, happily, the checked *peignoir* had cooled me sufficiently to enable me to recollect. So I took my farewell—one not unlike Medora's and Conrad's, Fitzhervey and Guatamara having kindly withdrawn as soon as the bottled porter was finished—and I went out of the house in a very blissful state, despite Guinness and the unwelcome demi-toilette, which did not accord with Eugene Sue's and the Parlor Library description of the general getting up and stunning appearance of heroines and peeresses, "reclining, in robes of cloud-like tissue and folds of the richest lace, on a cabriole couch of amber velvet, while the air was filled with the voluptuous perfume of the flower-children of the south, and music from

unseen choristers lulled the senses with its divinest harmony," &c., &c., &c.

Bottled porter and a checked dressing-gown! Say what you like, sirs, it takes a very strong passion to overcome *those*. I have heard men ascribe the waning of their affections after the honeymoon to the constant sight of their wives—whom before they had only seen making papa's coffee with an angelic air and a toilette *tiree a quatre épingles*—everlastingly coming down too late for breakfast in a dressing-gown; and, upon my soul, if ever I marry, which Heaven in pitiful mercy forfend! and my wife make her appearance in one of those confounded *peignoirs*, I will give that much-run after and deeply-to-be-pitied public character, the Divorce Judge, some more work to do—I will, upon my honor.

However, the *peignoir* had not iced me enough that time to prevent my tumbling out of the house in as delicious an ecstasy as if I had been eating some of Monte Cristo's "hatchis." As I went out, not looking before me, I came bang against the chest of somebody else, who, not admiring the rencontre, hit my cap over my eyes, and exclaimed, in not the most courtly manner, you will acknowledge, "You cursed owl, take that, then! What are you doing here, I should like to know?"

"Confound your impudence!" I retorted, as soon as my ocular powers were restored, and I saw the blue eyes, fair curls, and smart figure of my ancient Iolaus, now my bitterest foe—"confound your impertinence! what are you doing here? you mean."

"Take care, and don't ask questions about what doesn't concern you," returned Little Grand, with a laugh—a most irritating laugh. There are times when such cchininations sting one's ears more than a volley of oaths. "Go home and mind your own business, my chicken. You are a green bird, and nobody minds you, but still you'll find it as well not to come poaching on other men's manors."

"Other men's manors! Mine, if you please," I shouted, so mad with him I could have floored him where he stood.

"Phew!" laughed Little Grand, screwing up his lips into a contemptuous whistle, "you've been drinking too much Bass, my daisy; 'tisn't good for young heads—can't stand it. Go home, innocent."

The insult, the disdainful tone, froze my blood. My heart swelled with a sense of outraged dignity and injured manhood. With a conviction of my immeasurable superiority of position, as the beloved of that divine creature, I emancipated myself from the certain sort of slavery I was generally in to Little Grand, and spoke as I conceived it to be the habit of gentlemen whose honor had been wounded to speak.

"Mr. Grandison, you will pay for this insult. I shall expect satisfaction."

Little Grand laughed again—absolutely grinned, the audacious young imp—and he twelve months younger than I, too!

"Certainly, sir. If you wish to be made a target of, I shall be delighted to oblige you. I can't keep ladies waiting. It is always Place aux dames! with me; so, for the present, good morning?"

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down to earth, and are separated from their natural nourishment of manna and nectar, they must take what they can get, even though it be so coarse and sublunary a thing as Guinness's XXX, must they not, sir? Yes, I felt very *exalte* with my affair of honor and my affair of the heart, Little Grand for my foe, and my Marchioness for a love. I never stopped to remember that I might be smashing with frightful recklessness the Sixth and the Seventh Commandments. If Little Grand got shot, he must thank himself; he should not have insulted me; and if there was a Marquis St. Julian, why—I pitied, him, poor fellow! that was all.

Full of these sublime sensations—grown at least three feet in my varnished boots—I lounged into the ball-room, feeling supreme pity for the ensigns who were chattering round the door, admiring those poor, pale garrison girls. *They* had not a duel and a Marchioness; *they* did not know what beauty meant—what life was!

I did not dance—I was above that sort of thing now—there was not a woman worth the trouble in the room; and about the second waltz I saw my would-be rival talking to Ruthven, a fellow in Ours. Little Grand did not look glum or dispirited, as he ought to have done after the interview he must have had; but probably that was the boy's brass. He would never look beaten if you had hit him till he was black and blue. Presently Ruthven came up to me. He was not over-used to his business, for he began the opening chapter in rather school-boy fashion.

"Hallo, Gus! so you and Little Grand have been falling out. Why don't you settle it with a little mill? A vast deal better than pistols. Duels always seem to me no fun. Two men stand up like fools, and—"

"Mr. Ruthven," said I, very haughtily, "if your principal desire is to apologize—"

"Apologize! Bless your soul, no! But—"

"Then," said I, cutting him uncommonly short indeed, "you can have no necessity to address yourself to me, and I beg to refer you to my friend and second, Mr. Heavystone."

Wherewith I bowed, turned on my heel, and left him.

I did not sleep that night, though I tried hard, because I thought it the correct thing for heroes to sleep sweetly till the clock strikes the hour of their duel, execution, &c., or whatever it may hap. Egmont slept, Argyle slept, Philippe Egalite, scores of them, but I could not. Not that I funk'd it, thank heaven—I never had a touch of that—but because I was in such a delicious state of excitement self-admiration, and heroism, which had not cooled when I found myself walking down to the appointed place by the beach with poor old Heavy, who was intensely impressed by being charged with about five quires of the best cream-laid, to be given to the Marchioness in case I fell. Little Grand and Ruthven came on the ground at almost the same moment, Little Grand eminently jaunty and most *confoundedly* handsome. We took off our caps with distant ceremony; the Castilian hidalgos were never more stately; but, then, what Knights of the Round Table ever splintered spears for such a woman?

The paces were measured, the pistols taken out of their case. We were just placed, and Ruthven, with a handkerchief in his hand, and just enumerated, in awful accents, "One! two!"—the "three!" yet hovered on his lips, when he heard a laugh—the third laugh that had chilled my blood in twenty-four hours. Somebody's hand was laid on Little Grand's shoulder, and Conran's voice interrupted the whole thing.

"Hallo, young ones! what farce is this?"

"Farce, sir!" retorted Little Grand, hotly—"farce? It is no farce. It is an affair of honor, and—"

"Don't make me laugh, my dear boy," smiled Conran; "it is so much too warm for such an exertion. Pray, why are you and your once sworn friend making popinjays of each other?"

"Mr. Grandison has grossly insulted me," I began, "and I demand satisfaction. I will not stir from the ground without it, and—"

"You *sha'n't*," shouted Little Grand. "Do you dare to pretend I want to funk, you little contemptible—"

Though it was too warm, Conran went off into a fit of laughter.

I dare say our sublimity had a comic touch in it of which we never dreamt. "My dear boys, pray don't; it is too fatiguing. Come, Grand, what is it all about?"

"I deny your right to question me, Major," retorted Little Grand, in a fury. "What have you to do with it? I mean to punish that young owl yonder—who didn't know how to drink anything but milk-and-water, didn't know how to say bo! to a goose, till I taught him—for very abominable impertinence, and I'll—"

"My impertinence! I like that!" I shouted. "It is your unwarrantable, overbearing self-conceit, that makes you the laughing-stock of all the mess, which—"

"Silence!" said Conran's still stern voice, which subdued us into involuntary respect. "No more of this nonsense! Put up those pistols, Ruthven. You are two hot-headed, silly boys, who don't know for what you are quarrelling. Live a few years longer, and you won't be so eager to get into hot water, and put cartridges into your best friends. No, I shall not hear any more about it. If you do not instantly give me your words of honor not to attempt to repeat this folly, as your senior officer I shall put you under arrest for six weeks."

O Alexandre Dumas!—O Monte Cristo!—O heroes of yellow paper and pluck invincible! I ask pardon of your shades; I must record the fact, lowering and melancholy as it is, that before our senior officer our heroine melted like Vanille ice in the sun, our glories tumbled to the ground like twelfth-cake ornaments under children's fingers, and before the threat of arrest the lions lay down like lambs.

Conran sent us back, humbled, sulky and crestfallen, and resumed his solitary patrol upon the beach, where, before the sun was fairly up, he was having a shot at curlews. But if he was a little stern, he was no less kind-hearted; and in the afternoon of that day, while he lay after his siesta, smoking on his little bed, I unburdened myself to him. He did not laugh at me, though I saw a quizzical smile under his black mustaches.

"What is your divinity's name?" he asked, when I had finished.

"Eudoxia Adelaida, Marchioness St. Julian."

"The Marchioness St. Julian! Oh!"

"Do you know her?" I inquired, somewhat perplexed by his tone.

He smiled straight out this time.

"I don't know *her*, but there are a good many Peeresses in Malta and Gibralter, and along the line of the Pacific, as my brother Ned, in the *Belisarius*, will tell you. I could count two score such of my acquaintance off at this minute."

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her dazzling white teeth showing in the sunniest of smiles, and both hands outstretched.

"Augustus, *bien aimé*, you are rather—" "Late," I suppose she was going to say, but she stopped dead short, her teeth remained parted in a stereotype smile, a blankness of dismay came over her luminous eyes. She caught sight of Conran, and I imagined I heard a very low-breathed "Curse the fellow!" from courteous Lord Dolph. Conran came forward, however, as if he did not notice it; there was only that queer smile lurking under his mustaches. I introduced him to them and the Marchioness smiled again, and Fitzhervey almost at once resumed his wonted extreme urbanity. But they were somehow or other wonderfully ill at ease—wonderfully for people in such high society; and I was ill at ease, too, from being only able to attribute Eudoxia Adelaide's evident consternation at the sight of Conran to his having been some time or other an old love of hers. "Ah!" thought I, grinding my teeth, "that comes of loving a woman older than one's self."

The Major, however, seemed the only one who enjoyed himself. The Marchioness was beaming on him graciously, though her ruffled feathers were not quite smoothed down, and he was sitting by her with an intense amusement in his eyes, alternately talking to her about Stars and Garters, whom, by her answers, she did not seem to know so very intimately after all, and chatting with Fitzhervey about hunting, who, for a man that had hunted over every country, according to his own account, seemed to confuse Tom Edge with Tom Smith, the Burton with the Tedworth, a bullfinch with an ox-rail, in queer style, under Conran's cross-questioning. We had been in the room about ten minutes, when a voice, rich, low, sweet, rang out from some inner room, singing the glorious "Inflammatus." How strange it sounded in the Casa di Fiori!

Conran started, the dark blood rose over the clear bronze of his cheek. He turned sharply on to the Marchioness. "Good Heaven! whose voice is that?"

"My niece's," she answered, staring at him, and touching a hand-bell. "I will ask her to come and sing to us nearer. She has really a lovely voice."

Conran grew pale again, and sat watching the door with the most extraordinary anxiety. Some minutes went by; then Lucrezia entered, with the same haughty reserve which her soft young face always wore when with her aunt. It changed, though, when her glance fell on Conran, into the wildest rapture I ever saw on any countenance. He fixed his eyes on her with the look Little Grand says he's seen him wear in a battle—a contemptuous smile quivering on his face.

"Sing us something, Lucrezia dear, began the Marchioness. "You shouldn't be like the nightingales, and give your music only to night and solitude."

Lucrezia seemed not to hear her. She had never taken her eyes off Conran, and she went, as dreamily as that dear little *Amina* in the "Sonnambula," to her seat under the jesmines in the window. For a few minutes Conran, who didn't seem to care two straws what the society in general thought of him, took his leave, to the relief, apparently, of Fitzhervey and Guatamara.

As he went across the veranda—that memorable veranda—I sitting in dudgeon near the other window, while Fitzhervey was proposing ecarte to Heavy, whom we had found there on our entrance, and the Marchioness had vanished into her boudoir for a moment, I saw the Roman girl spring out after him, and catch hold of his arm:

"Victor! Victor! for pity's sake!—I never thought we should meet like this!"

"Nor did I."

"Hush! hush! you will kill me. In mercy, say some kinder words!"

"I can say nothing, that it would be courteous to you to say."

I couldn't have been as inflexible, whatever her sins might have been, with her hands clasped on me, and her

face raised so close to mine. Lucrezia's voice changed to a piteous wail:

"You love me no longer, then?"

"Love!" said Conran, fiercely—"love! How dare you speak to me of love? I held you to be fond, innocent, true as Heaven; as such, you were dearer to me than life—as dear as honor. I loved you with as deep a passion as ever a man knew—Heaven help me! I love you now! How am I rewarded? By finding you the companion of blackguards, the associate of swindlers, one of the arch-intrigantes who lead on youths to ruin with base smiles and devilish arts. Then you dare talk to me of love!"

With those passionate words he threw her off him. She fell at his feet with a low moan. He either did not hear, or did not heed it; and I, bewildered by what I heard, mechanically went and lifted her from the ground. Lucrezia had not fainted, but she looked so wild, that I believed the Marchioness, and set her down as mad; but then Conran must be mad as well, which seemed too incredible a thing for me to swallow—our cool Major mad!

"Where does he live?" asked Lucrezia of me, in a breathless whisper.

"He? Who?"

"Victor—your officer—Signor Conran."

"Why, he lives in Valetta, of course."

"Can I find him there?"

"I dare say, if you want him."

"Want him! Oh, Santa Maria! is not his absence death? Can I find him?"

"Oh, yes, I dare say. Any body will show you Conran's rooms."

"Thank you."

With that, this mysterious young lady left me, and I turned in through the window again. Heavy and the men were playing at lansequenet, that most perilous, rapid, and bewitching of all the resistless card circes. There was no Marchioness, and having done it once with impunity I thought I might do it again, and lifted the amber curtain that divided the boudoir from the drawing-room. What did I behold? Oh! torture unexampled! Oh! fiendish agony! There was Little Grand—self-conceited, insulting, impertinent, abominable, unendurable Little Grand—on the amber satin couch, with the Marchioness leaning her head on his shoulder, and looking up in his thrice-confounded face with her most adorable smile, my smile, that had beamed, and, as I thought, beamed only upon me!

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Then entered a rectoress of a neighbouring parish, to whom my mother and the girls related with innocent exultation of my grand friends at Malta; how Lord A. Fitzhervey was my sworn ally, and the Marchioness St. Julian had quite taken me under her wing. And the rectoress, having a son of her own, who was not doing anything so grand at Cambridge, but principally sotting beer at a Cherryhinton public, smiled and was wrathful, and said to her lord at dinner:

"My dear, did you ever hear of a Marchioness St. Julian?"

"No, my love, I believe not—never."

"Is there one in the peerage?"

"Can't say, my dear. Look in Burke."

So the rectoress got Burke and closed it after deliberate inspection, with malignant satisfaction.

"I thought not. How ridiculous those St. Johns are about that ugly boy Augustus. As if Tom were not worth a hundred of him!"

I was too occupied with my own miseries then to think about Conran and Lucrezia, though sometime after I heard all about it. It seems, that, a year before, Conran was on leave in Rome, and at Rome, loitering about the Campagna one day, he made a chance acquaintance with an Italian girl, by getting some flowers for her she had tried to reach and could not. She was young, enthusiastic, intensely interesting, and had only an old Roman nurse, deaf as a post and purblind, with her. The girl was Lucrezia da Guari, and Lucrezia was lovely as one of her own myrtle or orange flowers. Somehow or other Conran went there the next day, and the next, and the next, and so on for a good many days, and always found Lucrezia. Now, Conran had at bottom a touch of unstirred romance, and, moreover, his own idea of what sort of woman he could love. Something in this untrained yet winning Campagna flower answered to both. He was old enough to trust his own discernment, and, after a month or two's walks and talks, Conran, one of the proudest men going, offered himself and his name to a Roman girl of whom he knew nothing, except that she seemed to care for him as he had had a fancy to be cared for all his life. It was a deucedly romantic thing—however, he did it! Lucrezia had told him her father was a military officer, but somehow or other this father never came to light, and when he called at their house—or rather rooms—Conran always found him out, which he thought queer, but, on the whole, rather providential, and he set the accident down to a foreigner's roaming habits.

The day Conran had really gone the length of offering to make an unknown Italian his wife, he went, for the first time in the evening, to Da Guari's house. The servant showed him in unannounced to a brightly-lighted chamber, reeking with wine and smoke, where a dozen men were playing *trente et quarante* at an amateur bank, and two or three others were gathered round what he had believed his own fair and pure Campagna flower. He understood it all; he turned away with a curse upon him. He wanted love and innocence; adventuresses he could have by the score, and he was sick to death of them. From that hour he never saw her again till he met her at the Casa di Fiori.

The next day I went to Conran while he was breakfasting, and unburdened my mind to him. He looked ill and haggard, but he listened to me very kindly, though he spoke of the people at the Casa di Fiori in a hard, brief, curious manner.

"Plenty have been taken in like you, Gus," he said. "I was, years ago, in my youth, when I joined the army. There are scores of such women, as I told you, down the line of the Pacific, and about here; anywhere, in fact, where the army and navy give them fresh pigeons to be gulled. They take titles that sound grand in boys' ears, and fascinate them till they've won all their money, and then—send them to the dogs. Your Marchioness St. Julian's real name is Sarah Briggs."

I gave an involuntary shriek. Sarah Briggs finished

me. It was the death-stroke that could never be got over.

"She was a ballet-girl in London," continued Conran; "then, when she was sixteen, married that Fitzhervey, alias Briggs, alias Smith, alias what you please, and set up in her present more lucrative employment with her three or four confederates. Saint-Jeu was expelled from Paris for keeping a hell in the Chaussee d'Antin, Fitzhervey was a leg at Newmarket, Orangia Magnolia a lawyer's clerk who was had up for forgery, Guatamara is—by another name—a scoundrel of Rome. There is the history of your Maltese Peerage, Gussy. Well, you'll be wider awake next time. Wait, there is somebody at my door. Stay here a moment, I'll come back to you."

Accordingly, I stayed in his bedroom, where I had found him writing, and he went into his sitting room, of which, from the diminutiveness of his domicile, I commanded a full view, sit where I would. What was my astonishment to see Lucrezia! I went to his bedroom door; it was locked from the outside, so I perforce remained where I was, to, *nolens volens*, witness the finish of last night's interview.

Stern to the last extent and deadly pale, Conran stood, too surprised to speak, and most probably at a loss for words.

Lucrezia came up to him nevertheless with the abandonment of youth and southern blood.

"Victor! Victor! let me speak to you. You shall listen; you shall not judge me unheard."

"Signorina, I have judged you by only too ample evidence."

He had recovered himself now, and was as cool as needs be.

"I deny it. But you love me still?"

"Love you? More shame on me? A laugh, a compliment, a carcass, a cashmere, is as much as such women as you are worth. Love becomes ridiculous named in the same breath with you."

She caught hold of his hand and crushed it in both her own.

"Kill me if you will. Death would have no sting from your hand, but never speak such words to me."

Her voice trembled.

"How can I choose but speak them? You know that I believed you in Italy, and how on that belief I offered you my name—a name never yet stained, never yet held unworthy. I lost you, to find you in society which stamped you forever. A lovely fiend, holding raw boys enchain'd, that your associates might rifle their purses with marked cards and cogged dice. I hoped to have found a diamond, without spot or flaw. I discovered my error too late; it was only glass, which all men were free to pick up and trample on at their pleasure."

He tried to wrench his hand away, but she would not let it go.

"Hush! hush! listen to me first. If you once thought me worthy of your love, you may, surely, now accord me pity. I shall not trouble you long. After this, you need see me no more. I am going back to my old convent. You and the world will soon forget me, but I shall remember you, and pray for you, as dearer than my own soul."

Conran's head was bent down now, and his voice was thick, as he answered briefly:

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She shuddered as she paused, and leaned her forehead on Conran's hand. He did not repulse her, and she continued, in her broken, simple English:

"The evening you promised me what I should have needed to have been an angel to be worthy of—your love and your name—that very evening, when I reached home, my father bade me dress for a soiree he was going to give. I obeyed him, of course. I knew nothing but what he told me, and I went down, to find a dozen young nobles and a few Englishmen drinking and playing on a table covered with green cloth. Some few of them came up to me, but I felt frightened; their looks, their tones, their florid compliments, were so different to yours. But my father kept his eye on me, and would not let me leave. While they were leaning over my chair, and whispering in my ear, *you* came to the door of the salon, and I went toward you, and you looked cold and harsh, as I had never seen you before, and put me aside, and turned away without a word. Oh, Victor! why did you not kill me then? Death would have been kindness. Your Othello was kinder to Desdemona; he slew her—he did not *leave* her. From that hour I never saw you, and from that hour my father persecuted me because I would never join in his schemes, nor enter his vile gaming-rooms. Yet I have lived with him, because I could not get away. I have been too carefully watched. We Italians are not free, like your happy English girls. A few weeks ago we were compelled to leave Rome, the young Contino di Firenze had been stilettoed leaving my father's rooms, and he could stay in Italy no longer. We came here and joined that hateful woman, who calls herself Marchioness St. Julian; and, because she could not bend me to her will, gives out that I am her niece, and mad! I wonder I am *not* mad, Victor. I wish hearts would break as the romancers make them; but how long one suffers and lives on! Oh, my love, my soul, my life, only say that you believe me, and look kindly at me once again, then I will never trouble you again, I will only pray for you. But believe me, Victor. The Mother Superior of my convent will tell you it is the truth that I speak. Oh, for the love of Heaven, believe me! Believe me or I shall die!"

It was not in the nature of man to resist her; there was truth in the girl's voice and face, if ever truth walked abroad on earth. And Conran did believe her, and told her so in a few unconnected words, lifting her up in his arms, and vowing, with most unrighteous oaths, that her father should never have power to persecute her again as long as he himself lived to shelter and take care of her.

I was so interested in my Monte Cristo and Haidee (it was so like a chapter out of a book), that I entirely forgot my durance vile, and my novel and excessively disgraceful, though enforced, occupation of spy; and there I stayed, alternating between my interest in them and my agonies at the revelations concerning my Eudoxia Adelaida—oh, hang it! I mean Sarah Briggs—till, after a most confounded long time, Conran saw fit to take Lucrezia off, to get asylum for her with the Colonel's wife for a day or two, that "those fools might not misconstrue her." By which comprehensive epithet he, I suppose, politely designated "Ours."

Then I went my ways to my own room, and there I found a scented, mauve-hued, creamy billet doux, in uncommon bad handwriting, though, from my miserable Eudoxia Adelaida to the "friend and lover of her soul." Confound the woman! how I swore at that daintily perfumed and most vilely-scrawled letter. To think that where that beautiful signature stretched from one side to the other—"Eudoxia Adelaida St. Julian"—there ought to have been that short, vile, low-bred, hideous, billingsgate cognomen of "Sarah Briggs!"

In the note she reproached me—the wretched hypocrite—for my departure the previous night, "without one farewell to your Eudoxia, O cruel Augustus!" and ask me to give her a rendezvous at some vineyards lying a little way off the Casa di Fiori, on the road to Melita. Now, being a foolish boy, and regarding myself as

having been loved and wronged, whereas I had only been playing the very common *role* of pigeon, I could not resist the temptation of going, just to take one last look of that fair, cruel face, and upbraid her with being the first to sow the fatal seeds of lifelong mistrust and misery in my only too fond and fatal, &c., &c., &c.

So, at the appointed hour, just when the sun was setting over the far-away Spanish shore, and the hush of night was sinking over the little, rocky, peppery, military-thick, Mediterranean isle, I found myself *en route* to the vineyards; which, till I came to Malta, had been one of my delusions, Idea picturing them in wreaths and avenues, Reality proving them hop-sticks and parched earth. I drew near; it was quite dark now, the sun had gone to sleep under the blue waves, and the moon was not yet up. Though I knew she was Sarah Briggs, and an adventuress who had made game of me, two facts that one would fancy might chill the passion out of anybody, so mad was I about that woman, that, if I had met her then and there, I should have let her wheedle me over, and gone back to the Casa di Fiori with her and been fleeced again: I am sure I should, sir, and so would you, if, at eighteen, new to life, you had fallen in with Eudox—pshaw!—with Sarah Briggs, my Marchioness St. Julian.

I drew near the vineyards: my heart beat thick, I could not see, but I certainly heard the rustle of her dress, caught the perfume of her hair. All her sins vanished: how could I upbraid her, though she were three times over Sarah Briggs? Yes, she was coming; I *felt* her near; an electric thrill rushed through me as soul met soul. I heard a murmured "Dearest, sweetest!" I felt the warm clasp of two arms, but—a cold row of undress waistcoat-buttons came against my face, and a voice I knew too well cried out, as I rebounded from him, impelled thereto by a not gentle kick—

"The devil? get out? Who the deuce are you?"

We both stopped for breath. At that minute up rose the silver moon, and in its tell-tale rays we glared on one another, I and Little Grand.

That silence was sublime: the pause between Beethoven's andante allegro—the second before the Spanish bull rushes upon the terreador.

"You little miserable wretch!" burst out Grand, slowly and terribly; "you little mean, sneaking, spying, contemptible milksop! I should like to know what you mean by bringing out your ugly phiz at this hour, when you used to be afraid of stirring out for fear of nurse's bogies? And to dare to come lurking after me!"

"After you, Mr. Grandison!" I repeated, with grandiloquence. "Really you put too much importance on your own movements. I came by appointment to meet the Marchioness St. Julian, whom, I presume, as you are well acquainted with her, you know in her real name of Sarah Briggs, and to—"

"Sarah Briggs!—you come by appointment?" stammered Little Grand.

"Yes, sir; if you disbelieve my word of honor, I will descend to show you my invitation."

"You little ape!" swore Grand, coming back to his previous wrath; "it is a lie, a most abominable unwarrantable lie! I came by appointment, sir; you did no such thing. Look there!"

And he flaunted before my eyes in the moonlight the facsimile of my letter, verbatim copy, save that in his Cosmo was put in the stead of Augustus.

"Look there!" said I, giving him mine.

Little Grand snatched it, read it over once, twice, thrice, then drooped his head, with a burning color in his face, and was silent.

The "knowing hand" was done!

We were both of us uncommonly quiet for ten minutes, neither of us liked to be the first to give in.

At last Little Grand looked up and held out his hand, no more nonsense about him now.

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chaff one another. She's a cursed actress, and—let's make it up, old boy."

We made it up accordingly—when Little Grand was not conceited he was a very jolly fellow—and then I gave him my whole key to the mysteries, intricacies and charms of our Casa di Fiori. We could not chaff one another, but poor Little Grand was pitifully sore then, and for long afterwards. He, the "old bird," the cool hand, the sharp one of Ours, to have been done brown, to be the joke of the mess, the laugh of all the men, down to the weest drummer-boy! Poor Little Grand! He was too done up to swagger, too thoroughly angry with himself to swear at anybody else. He only whispered to me, "Why the dickens could she want you and me to meet ourselves?"

"To give us a finishing hoax, I suppose," I suggested.

Little Grand drew his cap over his eyes, and hung his head down in abject humiliation.

"I suppose so. What fools we have been, Simon! And, I say, I've borrowed three hundred of old Miraflores, and it's all gone up at that devilish Casa; and how I shall get it from the governor, Heaven knows, for I don't."

"I'm in the same pickle, Grand," I groaned. "I've given that old rascal notes of hand for two hundred pounds, and, if it don't drop from the clouds, I shall never pay it. Oh, I say, Grand, love comes deucedly expensive."

"Ah!" said he, with a sympathetic shiver, "think what a pair of hunters we might have had for the money!" With which dismal and remorseful remembrance the old bird, who had been trapped like a young pigeon, swore mightily, and withdrew into humbled and disgusted silence.

Next morning we heard, to our comfort—what lots of people there always are to tell us how to lock our stable-door when our solitary mare has been stolen—that, with a gentle hint from the police, the Marchioness St. Julian, with her *confreres*, had taken wing to the Ionian isles, where at Corfu or Cephalonia, they will re-erect the Casa di Fiori, and glide gently on again from vingt-et-un to loo, and from loo to lasquenet, under eyes as young and blinded as our own. They went without Lucrezia. Conran took her into his own hands. Any other man in the regiment would have been pretty well ridiculed at taking a bride out of the Cara di Fiori; but the statements made by the high-born Abbess of her Roman convert were so clear, and so to the girl's honor, and he had such a way of holding his own, of keeping off liberties from himself and anything belonging to him, and was, moreover, known to be of such fastidious honor, that his young wife was received as if she had been a Princess in her own right. With her respected parent Conran had a brief interview previous to his flight from Malta, in which, with a few gentle hints, he showed that worthy that it would be wiser to leave his daughter unmolested for the future, and I doubt if Mr. Orangia Magnolia, alias Pepe Guarí, would know his own child in the joyous, graceful, daintily-dressed mistress of Conran's handsome Parisian establishment.

Little Grand and I suffered cruelly. We were the butts of the mess for many a long month afterwards, when every idiot's tongue asked us on every side after the health of the Marchioness St. Julian? when we were going to teach them lansquenet? how often we heard from the aristocratic members of the Maltese Peerage? with like delightful pleasantries, which the questioners deemed high wit. We paid for it, too, to that arch old screw, Balthazar; but I doubt very much if the money were not well lost, and the experience well gained. It cured me of my rawness and Little Grand of his self-conceit, the only thing that had before spoilt that good-hearted, quick-tempered, and clever-brained little fellow. Oh, Pater and Materfamilias, disturb not yourself so unnecessarily about the crop of wild oats which your young ones are sowing broadcast. Those wild oats often spring from a good field of high spirit, hot courage, and thoughtless generosity, that are the sign and basis of nobler virtues to come, and from them very often rise two goodly plants—Experience and Discernment.

## LADY MARABOUT'S TROUBLES;

OR,

### THE WORRIES OF A CHAPERONE.

#### IN THREE SEASONS.

##### SEASON THE FIRST.—THE ELIGIBLE.

ONE of the kindest-natured persons that I ever knew on this earth, where kind people are as rare as black eagles or red deer, is Helena, Countess of Marabout, *nee* De Boncoeur. She has foibles, she has weaknesses—who amongst us has not?—she will wear her dresses *decolletees*, though she's sixty, if Burke tells us truth; she will rouge and practice a thousand other little toilette tricks; but they are surely innocent, since they deceive nobody; and if you wait for a woman who has no artifices, I am afraid you shall have to forswear the sex *in toto*, my friends, and come growling back to your Diogenes' tub in the Albany, with your lantern still lit every day of your lives.

Lady Marabout is a very charming person. As for her weaknesses, she is all the nicer for them, to my taste. I like people with weaknesses myself; those without them do look so dreadfully scornfully and unsympathizingly upon one from the altitude of their superiority, *de tonne la hauteur de sa betise*, as a witty Frenchman says. Humanity was born with weaknesses. If I were a beggar, I might hope for a coin from a man with some; a man without any, I know, would shut up his porte-monnaie, with an intensified click, to make me feel trebly envious, and consign me to D 15 and his truncheon, on the score of vagrancy.

Lady Marabout is a very charming person, despite her little foibles, and she gives very pleasant little dinners, both at her house in Lowndes Square and in her jointure villa at Twickenham, where the bad odors of Thames are drowned in the fragrance of the geraniums, piled in great heaps of red, white, and variegated blossom in the flower-beds on the lawn. She has been married twice, but has only one son, by her first union—Carruthers, of the Guards—a very good fellow, whom his mother thinks perfection, though if she *did* know certain scenes in her adored Philip's life, the good lady might hesitate before she endowed her son with all the cardinal virtues as she does at the present moment. She has no daughters, therefore you will wonder to hear that the prime misery, burden, discomfort and worry of her life is chaperonage. But so it is.

Lady Marabout is the essence of good nature; she can't say No; that unpleasant negative monosyllable was never heard to issue from her full, smiling, kind-looking lips; she is in a high position, she has an extensive circle, thanks to her own family and those of the baronet and peer she successively espoused; and some sister or cousin, or friend, is incessantly hunting her up to bring out their girls, and sell them well off out of hand, young ladies being goods extremely likely to hang on hand nowadays.

"Of all troubles the troubles of a chaperone are the greatest," said Lady Marabout to me at the wedding *dejeuner* of one of her proteges. "In the first place, one looks on at others' campaigns instead of conducting them one's self; secondly, it brings back one's own bright days to see the young things' smiles and blushes, like that girl's just now (I do hope she'll be happy!); and thirdly, one has all the responsibility, and gets all the blame if anything goes wrong. I'll never chaperone anybody again now I have got rid of Leila."

So does Lady Marabout say twenty times; yet has she invariably some young lady under her wing, whose relatives are defunct, or invalided, or in India, or out of society somehow; and we all of us call her house The Yard, and her (among ourselves) not Lady Marabout but Lady Tattersall. The worries she has in her chaperone's office would fill a folio, specially as her heart inclines to the encouragement of romance, but her reason to the banishment thereof

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## LADY MARABOUT'S TROUBLES;

OR,

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and while her tenderness suffers if she thwarts her proteges' leanings, her conscience gives her neuralgic twinges if she abets them to unwise matches while under her dragonnage.

"What's the matter, mother?" asked Carruthers, one morning. He's very fond of his mother, and will never let any one laugh at her in his hearing.

"Matter? Everything!" replied Lady Marabout, concisely and comprehensively, as she sat on the sofa in her boudoir, with her white-ringed hands and her *bien conserver* look, and her kindly pleasant eyes, and her rich dress; one could see what a pretty woman she has been, and that Carruthers may thank her for his good looks. "To begin with, Felicie has been so stupid as to marry—married the green grocer (whom she will ruin in a week!)—and has left me to the mercies of a stupid woman who puts pink with cerise, mauve with magenta, and sky-blue with azurine, and has no recommendation except that she is as ugly as the Medusa, and so will not tempt you to—"

"Make love to her, as I did to Marie," laughed Carruthers. "Marie was a pretty little dear; it was very severe in you to send her away."

Lady Marabout tried hard to look severe and condemnatory, but failed signally, nature had formed the smooth brow and the kindly eyes in far too soft a mould.

"Don't jest about it, Philip; you know it was a great pain, annoyance, and scandal to me. Well! Felicie is gone, and Oakes was seen pawning some of my Mechlin the other day, so I have been obliged to discharge her; and they both of them suited me so well! Then Bijou is ill, poor little pet—"

"With repletion of chicken panada?"

"No; Bijou isn't such a gourmet. You judge him by yourself, I suppose; men always do! Then Lady Hautton told me last night that you were the wildest man on town, and at forty—"

"You think I ought to ranger! So I will, my dear mother, some day; but at present I am—so very comfortable; it would be a pity to alter! What pains one's friends are always at to tell unpalatable things; if they would but be only half so eager to tell us the pleasant ones! I shall expect you to cut Lady Hautton if she speak badly of me. I can't afford to lose your worship, mother!"

"My worship? How conceited you are, Phillip! As for Lady Hautton, I believe she does dislike you, because you did not engage yourself to Adelina, and were selected aide-de-camp to Her Majesty instead of Hautton; still, I am afraid she spoke too nearly the truth."

"Perhaps Marie has entered her service and told tales."

But Lady Marabout wouldn't laugh, she always looks very grave about Marie.

"My worst trouble," she began hastily, "is that your aunt Honiton is too ill to come to town; no chance of her being well enough to come at all this season; and of course the charge of Valencia has devolved on me. You know how I hate chaperoning, and I did so hope I should be free this year; besides, Valencia is a great responsibility, very great; a girl of so much beauty always is; there will be sure to be so many men about her at once, and your aunt will expect me to marry her so very well. It is excessively annoying."

"My poor, dear mother!" cried Carruthers. "I grant you are an object of pity. You are everlastingly having young fillies sent you to break in, and they want such a tight hand on the ribbons."

"And a tight hand as you call it, I never had, and never shall have," sighed Lady Marabout. "Valencia will be no trouble to me on that score, however; she has been admirably educated, knows all that is due to her position, and will never give me a moment's anxiety by any imprudence or inadvertence. But she is excessively handsome, and a beauty is a great responsibility when she first comes out."

"Val. was always a handsome child, if I remember. I dare say she is a beauty now. When is she coming up? because I'll tell the men to mark the house and keep clear of

it," laughed Carruthers. "You're a dreadfully dangerous person, mother; you have always the best looking girl in town with you. Fulke Nugent says if he should ever want such a thing as a wife when he comes into the title, he shall take a look at the Marabout Yearlings Sale."

"Abominably rude of you and your friends to talk to me in your turf slang! I wish you would come and bid at the sale, Philip; I should like to see you married—well married, of course."

"My beloved mother!" cried Carruthers. "Leave me in peace, if you please, and catch the others if you can. There's Goodey, now; every chaperone and debutante in London has set traps for him for the last I don't know how many years; wouldn't he do for Valencia?"

"Goodwood? Of course he would; he would do for any one; the Dukedom is the oldest in the peerage. Goodwood is highly eligible. Thank you for reminding me, Philip. Since Valencia is coming, I must do my best for her." Which phrase meant with Lady Marabout that she must be very lynx-eyed as to settlements, and a perfect dragon to all detrimental connections, must frown with Medusa severity on all horrors of younger sons, and advocate with all the weight of personal experience the advantage and *agremens* of a good position, in all of which practicalities she generally broke down, with humiliation unspeakable, immediately her heart was enlisted and her sympathies appealed to on the enemy's side. She sighed, played with her bracelets thoughtfully, and then, heroically resigning herself to her impending fate, brightened up a little, and asked her son to go and choose a new pair of carriage-horses for her.

"Valencia will give me little trouble, I hope. So admirably brought-up a girl, and so handsome as she is, will be sure to marry soon, and marry well," thought Lady Marabout, self-congratulatory, as she dressed for dinner the day of her niece's arrival in town, running over mentally the qualifications and attractions of Valencia Valletort, while Felicie's successor, Mademoiselle Despreaux, whose crime was then to put pink with cerise, mauve with magenta, and sky-blue with azurine, gave the finishing touches to her toilette—"Valencia will give me no trouble; she has all the De Boncœur beauty, with the Valletort dignity. Who would do for her? Let me see; eligible men are not abundant, and those that are eligible are shy of being marked as Philip would say—perhaps from being hunted so much, poor things! There is Fulke Nugent, heir to a barony, and his father is ninety—very rich, too—he would do; and Philip's friend, Caradoc, poor, I know, but their Earldom's the oldest peerage patent. There is Eyre Lee, too; I don't much like the man, supercilious and empty-headed; still he's an unobjectionable alliance. And there is Goodwood. Every one has tried for Goodwood, and failed. I should like Valencia to win him; he is decidedly the most eligible man in town. I will invite him to dinner. If he is not attracted by Valencia's beauty, nothing can attract him—Despreaux, comme vous êtes bête. Otez ces panaches, de grâce."

"Valencia will give me no trouble; she will marry at once," thought Lady Marabout again, looking across the dinner-table at her niece.

If any young patrician might be likely to marry at once, it was the Hon. Valencia Valletort; she was, to the most critical, a beauty; her figure was perfect, her features were perfect, and if you complained that her large glorious eyes were a trifle too changeless in expression, that her cheek, exquisitely independent of Marrchale powder, Blanc de Perle, and liquid rouge, though it was rarely varied with her thoughts and feelings, why you were very exacting, my good fellow, and should remember that nothing is quite perfect on the face of the earth—not even a racer or a woman—and that whether you bid at the Marabout yearling sales or the Bawcliffe, if you wish to be pleased you'd better leave a hypercritical spirit behind you, and not expect to get all points to your

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"I think you have, mother. Val's indisputably handsome. You must tell her to make play with Goodwood or Nugent."

Lady Marabout unfurled her fan, and indignantly interrupted him:

"My dear Philip! Do you suppose I would teach Valencia, or any girl under my charge, to lay herself out for any man, whoever or whatever it might be? I trust your cousin would not stoop to such maneuvers, did I even stoop to counsel them. Depend upon it, Philip, it is precisely those women who try to 'make play,' as you call it, with your sex that fail most to charm them. It is abominable the way in which you men talk, as if we all hunted you down, and would drive you to St. George's *nolens volens*."

"So you would, mother," laughed Carruthers. "We 'eligible men' have a harder life of it than rabbits in a warren, with a dozen beagles after them. From the minute we're of age we're beset with traps for the unwary, and the spring-guns are so dexterously covered with an inviting, innocent-looking turf of courtesies and hospitalities that it's next to a moral impossibility to escape them, let one retire into one's self, keep to monosyllables through all the courses of all the dinners and all the turns of all the vases, and avoid everything 'compromising,' as one may. I've suffered, and can tell you. I suffer still, though I believe and hope they are beginning to look on me as an incurable, given over to the clubs, the coulisses, and the cover-side. There's a fellow that's known still more of the *peines fortes et dures* than I. Goodwood's coming to ask for an introduction to Val, I would bet."

Goodwood was no uncouth Bruin, and he had strawberry-leaves in his gift; nor of your lacquered, or ormolu, or silver-gilt coronets, such as are cast about nowadays with a liberality that reminds one of flinging a handful of half-pence from a balcony, where the nimblest beggar is first to get the prize; but of the purest and best gold; and Goodwood had been tried for accordingly by every woman he came across for the last dozen years.

"Goodwood is certainly struck with her," thought Lady Marabout, as Despreaux disrobed her that night, running over with a retrogressive glance Valencia Valletort's successes at her first ball. "Very much struck, indeed, I should say. I will issue cards for another 'At Home.' As for 'making play' with him, as Philip terms it, of course that is only man's nonsense. Valencia will need none of those trickeries, I trust; still, it is one's duty to make the best alliance possible for such a girl, and—dear Adeliza would be very pleased."

"That's a decidedly handsome girl, that cousin of yours, Phil," said Goodwood, on the pavement before her Grace of Amandine's, in Grosvenor Place, at the same hour that night.

"I think she is counted like me?" said Carruthers. "Of course she's handsome, hasn't she De Boncœur blood in her, my good fellow? We're all of us good-looking, always have been, thank God! If you're inclined to sacrifice Goodwood, now's your time, and my mother'll be delighted. She's brought out about half a million of debutantes, I should say, in her time, and all of 'em have gone wrong, somehow; wouldn't go off at all, like damp gun-

powder, or would go off too quick in the wrong direction, like a volunteer's rifle charge; married ignominiously, or married obstinately, or never excited pity in the breast of any man, but had to retire to single-blessedness in the country, console themselves with piety and an harmonium, and spread nets for your young clerical victims. Give her a triumph at last, and let her have glory for once, as a chaperone, in catching you!"

Goodwood gave a little shiver, and tried to light a Manilla, which utterly refused to take light, for the twelfth time in half a minute.

"Hold your tongue! If the Templars' Order were extant, wouldn't I take the vows and bless them! What an unspeakable comfort and protection that white cross would be to us, Phil, if we could stick it on our coats and know it would say to every woman that looked at us, 'No go, my pretty little dears—not to be caught!' Marriage! I can't remember any time that that word wasn't my bugbear. When I was but a little chicken, some four years old, I distinctly remember, when I was playing with little Ida Keane on the terrace, hearing her mother simper to mine, 'Perhaps darling Goodwood may marry my little Ida some day, who knows?' I never would play with Ida afterwards; instinct preserved me; she's six or seven-and-thirty now, and weighs ten stone, I'm positive. Why won't they let us alone? The way journalists and dowagers, the fellows who want to write a taking article, and the women who want to get rid of a taking daughter, all badger us, in public and private, about marriage just now, is abominable, on my life; the affair's ours, I should say, not theirs, and to marry isn't the ultimatum of a man's existence, nor anything like it."

"I hope not! It's more like the extinguisher. Good-night, old fellow." And Carruthers drove away in his hansom, while Goodwood got into his night-brougham, thinking that for the sake of the title, the evil (nuptial) day must come, sooner or latter, but dashed off to forget the disagreeable obligation over the supper-table of the most sparkling empress of the demi-monde.

Lady Marabout had her wish; she brought out the belle of the season, and when a little time had slipped by, when the Hon. Val had been presented at the first Drawing-room, and shone there despite the worry, muddle, and squeeze incidental to that royal and fashionable ceremony, and she had gathered second-hand from her son what was said in the clubs relative to his new specimen of the Valletort beauty, she began to be happier under her duties than she had ever been before, and wrote letters to "dearest Adeliza," brimful of superlative adjectives and genuine warmth.

"Valencia will do me credit: I shall see her engaged before the end of June; she will only have to choose," Lady Marabout would say to herself some twenty times in the pauses of the morning concerts, the morning parties, the bazaar committees, the toilette consultations, the audiences to religious beggars, whose name was Legion and rapacity unmeasured.

"She will do me great credit," the semi-consoled chaperone would say to herself with self-congratulatory relief; and if Lady Marabout thought now and then, "I wish she were a trifle—a trifle more—demonstrative," she instantly checked such an ungrateful and hypocritical wish, and remembered that a heart is as highly treacherous and unadvisable possession for any young lady, and a most happy omission in her anatomy, though Lady Marabout had, she would confess to herself on occasions with great self-reproach, an unworthy and lingering weakness for that contraband article, for which she scorned and scolded herself with the very worst success.

"Goodwood's attentions are serious, Philip, say what you like," said the Countess to her son, as determinedly as a theologian states his pet points with wool in his ears, that he may not hear any Satan-inspired, rational and mathematical disproof of them, with which you may rashly seek to soil his tympana and smash his arguments—

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"Serious indeed, mother, if they tend matrimony-wards!" smiled Carruthers. "It's a very serious time indeed for unwary sparrows when they lend an ear to the call-bird, and think about hopping on to the lime twigs. I should think it's from a sense of compunction for the net you've led us into, that you ail particularize our attentions, whenever they point near St. George's, by that very suggestive little adjective 'serious!' Yes, I am half afraid poor Goodey is a little touched. He threw over our Derby sweepstakes up at Hornsey Wood yesterday to go and stifle himself in Willis's rooms at your bazaar, and buy a guinea cup of Souchong from Valencia; and, considering he's one of the best shots in England, I don't think you could have a more conclusive, if you could have a more poetic proof of devoted renunciation. I'd fifty times rather get a spear in my side, *a la Ivanhoe*, for a woman, than give up a Pigeon-match, a Cup-day or a Field-night!"

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"Never, *plaise a Dieu*," responded her son, piously over, his ice; "but if Goodwood's serious, what's Cardonnel? He lost his head, if you like, after the Valletort beauty."

"Major Cardonnel!" said Lady Marabout, hastily. "Oh no, I don't think so. I hope not—I trust not."

"Why so? He's one of the finest fellows in the service."

"I dare say; but you see, my dear Philip, he's not—not desirable."

Carruthers stroked his mustaches and laughed:

"Fie, fie, mother! if all other Belgraviennes are Mammon-worshippers, I thought you kept clear of the paganism. I thought your freedom from it was the only touch by which you wern't 'purely feminine,' as the lady novelists say of their pet bits of chill propriety."

"Worship Mammon! Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Lady Marabout. "But there's duties, you see, my dear; your friend is a very delightful man, to be sure; I like him excessively, and if Valencia felt any great preference for him—"

"You'd feel it your duty to counsel her to throw him over for Goodwood."

"I never said so, Philip," interrupted Lady Marabout, with as near an approach to asperity as she could achieve, which approach was less like vinegar than most people's best honey.

"But you implied it. What are 'duties' else, and why is poor Cardonnel 'not desirable'?"

Lady Marabout played a little tattoo with her spoon in perplexity.

"My dear Philip, you know as well as I do what I mean. One might think you were a boy of twenty to hear you!"

"My dear mother, like all disputants, when beaten in argument and driven into a corner, you resort to vituperation of your opponent!" laughed Carruthers, as he left her and lounged away to pick up the stick with which pretty Flora Elmers had just knocked the pipe out of Aunt Sally's head on to the velvet lawn of Lady George Frangipane's dower-house, leaving his mother by no means tranquillized by his suggestions.

"Dear me!" thought Lady Marabout, uneasily, as she conversed with the Dowager-Countess of Patchouli on the respective beauties of two new pelargonium seedlings, the

Leucadia and the Beatrice, for which her gardner had won the prize the day before at the Regent's Park Show—"dear me! why is there invariably this sort of cross-purposes in everything? It will be so grevious to lose Goodwood, (and he is decidedly struck with her; when he bought that rosebud yesterday of her at the bazaar, and put it in the breast of his waistcoat, I heard what he said, and it was no nonsense, no mere flirting complaisance either)—it would be so grievous to lose him; and yet if Valencia really cared for Cardonnel—and sometimes I almost fancy she does—I shouldn't know which way to advise. I thought it would be odd if a season could pass quietly without my having some worry of this sort!"

Carruthers was quite right. One fellow at least had lost his head after the beauty of the season, and he was Cardonnel, of the—Lancers, as fine a fellow, as Philip said, as any in the Queen's, but a dreadful detrimental in the eyes of all chaperones, because he was but the fourth son of one of the poorest peers in the United Kingdom, a fact which gave him an ægis from all assaults matrimonial, and a freedom from all smiles and wiles, traps and gins, which Goodwood was accustomed to tell him he bitterly envied him, and on which Cardonnel had fervently congratulated himself, till he came under the fire of the Hon. Val's large luminous eyes one night, when he was leveling his glass from his stall at Lady Marabout's box, to take a look at the new belle, as advised to do by that most fastidious female critic, Vane Steinberg. Valencia Valletort's luminous eyes had gleamed that night under their lashes, and pierced through the lenses of his lorgnon. He saw her, and saw nothing but her afterwards, as men looking on the sun keep it on their retina to the damage and exclusion of all other objects.

Goodwood's attentions were very marked, too, even to eyes less willing to construe them so than Lady Marabout's. Goodwood himself, if chaffed on the subject, vouchsafed nothing; laughed, stroked his moustaches, or puffed his cigar, if he happened to have that blessed resource in all difficulties, and comforter under all embarrassments, between his lips at the moment; but decidedly he sought Valencia Valletort more, or, to speak more correctly, he shunned her less than he'd ever done any other young lady, and one or two Sunday mornings—*mirabile dictu*—he was positively seen at St. Paul's, Knightbridge, in the seat behind Lady Marabout's sittings. A fact which, combining as it did a brace of miracles at once, of early rising and unusual piety, set every Belgravienne in that fashionable sanctuary watching over the top of her illuminated prayer book, to the utter destruction of her hopes and interruption of her orisons.

Dowagers began to tremble behind their fans, young ladies to quake over their bouquets; the topic was eagerly discussed by every woman from Clarges street to London Square; their Graces of Doncaster smiled well pleased on Valencia—she was unquestionable blood, and they so wished dear Goodwood to settle! There was whispered an awful whisper to the whole female world; whispered over matutinal chocolate, and luncheon Strasbourg pates, ball-supper Moets, and demi-monde-supper Silleri, over Vane Steinberg's cigar and Eulalie Rosiere's cigarette, over the *Morning Post* in the clubs, and *Le Follet* in the boudoir, that—the Pet Eligible would—marry! That the Pet Prophecy of universal smash was going to be fulfilled could hardly have occasioned greater consternation.

The soul of Lady Marabout had been disquieted ever since her son's suggestions at Lady George Frangipane's morning party, and she began to worry: for herself, for Valencia, for Goodwood, for Cardonnel, for her responsibilities in general, and for her "dearest Adeliza's" alternate opinions of her duenna qualifications in particular.

Things were nicely in train. Goodwood was beginning to bite at that very handsome fly the Hon. Val, and promised to be hooked and landed without much difficulty before long, and placed, hopelessly for him, triumphantly for her, in the lime-basket of matrimony. Things were beautifully in train, and Lady Marabout was for once flat-

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"I do not know really what to do or what to advise," would Lady Marabout say to herself over and over again (so disturbed by her onerous burden of responsibilities that she would let Despraux arrange the most outrageous coiffures, and, never noticing them, go out to dinner with emeralds on blue velvet, or something as shocking to feminine nerves in her temporary aberration), forgetting one very great point, which, remembered, would have saved her all trouble, that nobody asked her to do anything, and not a soul requested her advice. "But Goodwood is decidedly won, and Goodwood must not be lost; in our position we owe something to society," she would invariably conclude these mental debates; which last phase, being of a vagueness and obscure application that might have matched it with any Queen's speech or electoral address upon record, was a mysterious balm to Lady Marabout's soul, and spoke volumes to her, if a trifle hazy to you and to me.

"Arthur Cardonnel is excessively handsome! Such very good style! Isn't it a pity they're all so poor! His father played away everything—literally everything. The sons have no more to marry upon, any one of them, than if they were three cross-sweepers," said her ladyship, carelessly, driving home from St. Paul's one Sunday morning.

"She does like him!" sighed Lady Marabout over that Sabbath's luncheon wines. "It's always my fate—always; and Goodwood, never won before, will be thrown—actually thrown—away, as if he were the younger son of a Nobody!" which horrible waste was so terrible to her imagination that Lady Marabout could positively have shed tears at the bare prospect, and might have shed them, too, if the Hon. Val, the butler, two footmen, and a page had not inconveniently happened to be in the room at the time, so that she was driven to restrain her feelings and drink some Amontillado instead. Lady Marabout is not the first person by a good many who has had to smile over sherry with a breaking heart. Ah! Lips have quivered as they laughed over Chambertin, and trembled as they touched the bowl of a champagne-glass. Wine has assisted at many a joyful festa enough, but some that has been drunk in gayety has caught gleams, in the eyes of the drinkers, of salt water brighter than its brightest sparkles; water that no other eyes can see. Because we may drink Badminton laughingly when the gaze of Society the Non-Sympathetic is on us, do you think we must never have tasted any more bitter dregs? *Va-t'en, becasse.* Where have you lived? Nero does not always fiddle while Rome is burning from utter heartlessness, believe me, but rather—sometimes, perhaps—because his heart his aching!

"Goodwood will propose to-night, I fancy, he is so very attentive," thought Lady Marabout, sitting with her sister

chaperones on the cosy causeuses of a mansion in Carlton Terrace, at one of the last balls of the departing season. "I never saw dear Valencia look better, and certainly her waltzing is—Ah! good evening, Major Cardonnel! Very warm to-night, is it not? I shall be so glad when I am down again at Fernditton. Town, in the first week of July, is really not habitable."

And she furled her fan, and smiled on him with her pleasant eyes, and couldn't help wishing he hadn't been on the Marchioness Rondeletia's visiting list, he was such a detrimental, and he was ten times handsomer than Goodwood!

"Will Miss Valletort leave you soon?" asked Cardonnel, sitting down by her.

"Ah, monsieur vous êtes là!" thought Lady Marabout, as she answered, like a guarded diplomatist as she was, that it was not all settled at present what her niece's post-season destiny would be, whether Devon or Fernditton, or the Spas, with her mother, Lady Honiton; and then unfurled her fan again and chatted about Baden and her own indecision as to whether she should go there this September.

"May I ask you a question, and will you pardon me for its plainness?" asked Cardonnel, when she'd exhausted Baden's desirable and non-desirable points.

Lady Marabout shuddered as she bent her head, and thought, "The creature is never going to confide in me! He will win me over if he do, he looks so like his mother! And what shall I say to Adeliza?"

"Is your niece engaged to Goodwood or not?"

If ever a little fib was tempting to any lady, from Eve downward, it was tempting to Lady Marabout now! A falsehood would settle everything, send Cardonnel off the field, and clear all possibility of losing the "best match of the season." Besides, if not engaged to Goodwood actually to-night, Val would be, if she liked, to-morrow, or the next day, or before the week was over at the furthest—would it be such a falsehood after all? She colored, she fidgeted her fan, she longed for the little fib!—how terribly tempting it looked! But Lady Marabout is a bad hand at prevarication, and she hates a lie, and she answered bravely, with a regretful twinge, "Engaged? No; not—"

"Not yet! Thank God!" Lady Marabout stared at him and at the words muttered under his mustaches:

"Really, Major Cardonnel, I do not see why you—"

"Should thank Heaven for it? Yet I do—it is a reprieve. Lady Marabout, you and my mother were close friends; will you listen to me for a second, while we are not overheard? That I have loved your niece—had the madness to love her, if you will—you cannot but have seen; that she has given me some reasonable encouragement it is no coxcombry to say, though I have known from the first what a powerful rival I had against me; but that Valencia loves me and does not love him, I believe—nay, I know. I have said nothing decided to her! when all hangs on a single die we shrink from hazarding the throw. But I must know my fate to-night. If she come to you—as girls will, I believe, sometimes—for countenance and counsel, will you stand my friend?—will you, for the sake of my friendship with your son, your friendship with my mother, support my cause, and uphold what I believe Valencia's heart will say in my favor?"

Lady Marabout was silent; no Andalusian ever worried her fan more ceaselessly in coquetry than she did in perplexity. Her heart was appealed to, and when that was enlisted, Lady Marabout was lost!

"But—but—my dear Major Cardonnel, you are aware—" she began, and stopped. I should suppose it may be a little awkward to tell a man to his face he is "not desirable!"

"I am aware that I cannot match with Goodwood? I am; but I know, also, that Goodwood's love cannot match with mine, and that your niece's affection is not his. That he may win her I know women too well not to fear, therefore I ask you to be my friend. If she refuse me, will you

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Not at this ball, at any rate. Of all the worried chaperones and distracted duennas who hid their anxieties under pleasant smiles or affable lethargy, none were a quarter so miserable as Helena, Lady Marabout. Her heart and her head were enlisted on opposite sides; her wishes pulled one way, her sympathies another; her sense of justice to Cardonnel urged her to one side, her sense of duty to "dearest Adeliza" urged her to the other; her pride longed for one alliance, her heart yearned for the other. Cardonnel had confided in her and appealed to her; *sequitur*, Lady Marabout's honor would not allow her to go against him; yet it was nothing short of grossest treachery to poor Adeliza, down there in Devon, expecting every day to congratulate her daughter on a prospective duchy won, to counsel Valencia to take one of these beggared Cardonnels, and, besides—to lose all her own laurels, to lose the capture of Goodwood!

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"He spoke to me about you."

"Indeed!"

"Perhaps you can guess, my dear, what he said?"

"I am no clairvoyant, aunt;" and Miss Val yawned a little, and held out one of her long slender feet to admire it.

"Every woman, my love, becomes half a clairvoyant when she is in love," said Lady Marabout, a little bit impatiently; she hadn't been brought up on the best systems herself, and though she admired the refrigeration (on principle), it irritated her just a little now and then. "Did he—did he say anything to *you* to-night?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And what did you answer him, my love?"

"What would you advise me?"

Lady Marabout sighed, coughed, played nervously with the tassels of her peignoir, crumpled Bijou's ears with a reckless disregard to that priceless pet's feelings, and wished herself at the bottom of the Serpentine. Cardonnel had trusted her, she couldn't desert him; poor dear Adeliza had trusted her, she couldn't betray her; what was right to one would be wrong to the other, and to reconcile her divided duties was a Danaid's labor. For months she had worried her life out lest her advice should be asked, and now the climax was come, and asked it was.

"What a horrible position!" thought Lady Marabout.

She waited and hesitated till the pendule had ticked off sixty seconds; then she summoned her courage and spoke:

"My dear, advice in such matters is often very harmful, and always very useless; plenty of people have asked my counsel, but I never knew any of them take it unless it chanced to chime in with their fancy. A woman's best adviser is her own heart, specially on such a subject as this. But before I give my opinion, may I ask if you have accepted him?"

Lady Marabout's heart throbbed quick and fast as she put the momentous question, with an agitation for which she would have blushed before her admirably nonchalante niece; but the tug of war was coming, and if Goodwood should be lost!

"You have accepted him?" she asked again.

"No! I—refused him."

The delicate rose went out of the Hon. Val's cheeks for once, and she breathed quickly and shortly. Goodwood was not lost then!

Was she sorry—was she glad? Lady Marabout hardly knew; like Wellington, she felt the next saddest thing after a defeat is a victory.

"But you love him, Valencia?" she asked, half ashamed of suggesting such weakness, to this glorious beauty.

The Hon. Val unclasped her necklace as if it were a chain, choking her, and her face grew white and set—the coldest will feel on occasion, and all have some tender place that can winch at the touch.

"Perhaps; but such folly is best put aside at once. Certainly I prefer him to others, but to accept him would have been madness, absurdity. I told him so!"

"You told him so! If you had the heart to do so, Valencia, he has not lost much in losing you!" burst in Lady Marabout, her indignation getting the better of her judgment, and her heart, as usual, giving the *coup de grace* to her reason. "I am shocked at you! Every tender-hearted woman feels regret for affection she is obliged to repulse, even when she does not return it; and you, who love this man—"

"Would you have had me accept him, aunt?"

"Yes," cried Lady Marabout, firmly, forgetting every vestige of "duty," and every possibility of dear Adeliza's vengeance, "if you love him, I would, decidedly. When I married my dear Philip's father, he was what Cardonnel is, a cavalry man, as far off his family title then as Cardonnel is off his now."

"The more reason I should not imitate your imprudence, my dear aunt; death might not carry off the intermediate heirs quite so courteously in this case! No, I refused Major Cardonnel, and I did rightly; I should have repented it by now had I accepted him. There is nothing more silly than to be led away by romance. You De Boncœurs are romantic, you know; we Valletorts are happily free from the weakness. I am very tired, aunt, so good night."

The Hon. Val went, the waxlight she carried shedding a paler shade on her handsome face, whiter and more set than usual, but held more proudly, as if it had already wore the Doncaster coronet; and Lady Marabout sighed as she rang for her maid.

"Of course she acted wisely, and I ought to be very pleased; but that poor, dear fellow!—his eyes are so like his mother's!"

"I congratulate you, mother, on a clear field. You've sent poor Arthur off very nicely," said Carruthers, the next morning, paying his general visit in her boudoir before the day began, which is much the same time in town as in Greenland, and commences, whatever almanacs may say, about two or half-past P. M. "Cardonnel left this morning for Heaven knows where, and is going to exchange, Shellelo tells me, into the —th, which is ordered to Bengal, so he won't trouble you much more. When shall I be allowed to congratulate my cousin as the future Countess of Doncaster?"

"Please don't tease me, Philip. I've been vexed enough about your friend. When he came to me this morning, and asked me if there was no hope, and I was obliged to tell him there was none, I felt wretched," said Lady Marabout, as nearly pettishly as she ever said anything; "but I am really not responsible, not in the least. Besides, even you must admit that Goodwood is a much more desirable alliance, and if Valencia had accepted Cardonnel, pray what would all Belgravia have said? Why, that, disappointed of Goodwood, she took the other out of pure pique! We owe something to society, Philip, and something to ourselves."

Carruthers laughed.

"Ah, my dear mother, you women will never be worth all you ought to be till you leave off kowtow-ing to 'what will

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Not at this ball, at any rate. Of all the worried chaperones and distracted duennas who hid their anxieties under pleasant smiles or affable lethargy, none were a quarter so miserable as Helena, Lady Marabout. Her heart and her head were enlisted on opposite sides; her wishes pulled one way, her sympathies another; her sense of justice to Cardonnel urged her to one side, her sense of duty to "dearest Adeliza" urged her to the other; her pride longed for one alliance, her heart yearned for the other. Cardonnel had confided in her and appealed to her; *sequitur*, Lady Marabout's honor would not allow her to go against him; yet it was nothing short of grossest treachery to poor Adeliza, down there in Devon, expecting every day to congratulate her daughter on a prospective duchy won, to counsel Valencia to take one of these beggared Cardonnels, and, besides—to lose all her own laurels, to lose the capture of Goodwood!

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"I understand! So Goody's positively coming to the point up there, is he?"

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"No; but the question here is not of winning her, but of buying her. The price is a little high—a ducal coronet and splendid settlements, a wedding-ring and bondage for life; but he will buy her, nevertheless. Cardonnel couldn't pay the first half of the price, and so he was swept out of the auction-room. You are shocked, mother? Ah, truth is shocking sometimes, and always *maladroit*. one oughtn't to bring it into ladies' boudoirs."

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"My dear mother, I'll do my best to be sympathetic, I'll go and congratulate Goodwood as he gets in his cab, if you fancy I ought; but, you see, if I were in Dahomey beholding the head of my best friend coming off, I couldn't quite get up the amount of sympathy in their pleasure at the refreshing sight the Dahomites might expect from me, and so—"

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"Well, love, what did he say?" asked Lady Marabout, breathlessly, with eager delight and confident anticipation.

Like drops of ice on warm rose-leaves fell each word of the intensely chill and slightly sulky response on Lady Marabout's heart.

"He said that he goes to Cowes to-morrow for the Royal Yacht Squadron dinner, and then on in the *Anadyomene* to the Spitzbergen coast for walruses. He left a P. P. C. card for you."

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The Pet Eligible had flown off uncaught after all! Lady Marabout needed no further explanation—*tout fut dit*. They were both silent and paralyzed. Do you suppose Pompey and Cornelia had much need of words when they met at Lesbos after the horrible deroute of Pharsalia?

"I'm in your mother's blackest books for ever, Phil," said Goodwood to Carruthers in the express to Southampton for the R. Y. C. Squadron Regatta of that year, "but I can't help it. It's no good to badger us into marriage; it only makes us double, and run to earth. I was near compromising myself with your cousin, I grant, but the thing that chilled me was, she's too studied. It's all got up beforehand, and goes upon clockwork, and it don't interest one accordingly; the mechanism's perfect, but we know when it will raise its hand, and move its eyes, and bow its head, and when we've looked at its beauty once we get tired of it. That's the fault in Valencia, and in scores of them, and as long as they won't be natural, why, they can't have much chance with us!"

Which piece of advice Carruthers, when he next saw his mother, repeated to her, for the edification of all future *debutantes*, adding a small sermon of his own:

"My dear mother, I ask you, is it to be expected that we can marry just to oblige women and please the newspapers? Would you have me marched off to Hanover Square because it would be a kindness to take one of Lady Elmers' marriageable daughters, or because a leading journal fills up an empty column with farcical lamentation on our dislike to the bondage? Of course you wouldn't; yet, for no better reasons, you'd have chained poor Goodwood if you could have caught him. Whether a man likes to marry or not is certainly his own private business, though just now it's made a popular public discussion. Do you wonder that we shirk the institution? If we have not fortune, marriage cramps our energies, our resources, our ambitions, loads us with petty cares, and trebles our anxieties. To one who rises with such a burden on his shoulders, how many sink down in obscurity, who, but for the leaden weight of pecuniary difficulties with which marriage has laden their feet, might have climbed the highest round in the social ladder? On the other side, if we have fortune, if we have the unhappy happiness to be eligible, is it wonderful that we are not flattered by the worship of young ladies who love us for what we shall give them, that we don't feel exactly honored by being courted for what we are worth, and that we're not over-willing to give up our liberty to oblige those who look on us only as good speculations? What think you, eh?"

"My dear Philip, you are right. I see it—I don't dispute it; but when a thing becomes personal, you know philosopher becomes difficult. I have such letters from poor dear Adeliza—such letters! Of course she thinks it is all my fault, and I believe she will break entirely with me. It is so very shocking. You see all Belgravians coupled their names, and the very day that he went off to Cowes in that heartless, abominable manner, if an announcement of the alliance as arranged did not positively appear in the *Court Circular*. It did indeed! I am sure Anne Hautton was at the bottom of it; it would be just like her. Perhaps poor Valencia cannot be pitied after her treatment of Cardonnel, but it is very hard on me."

Lady Marabout is right; when a thing becomes personal philosophy becomes difficult. When your gun misses fire, and a fine cock bird whirrs up from the covert and takes wing unharmed, never to swell the number of your triumphs and the size of your game-bag, could you by any chance find it in your soul to sympathize with the bird's gratification at your mortification and its own good luck. I fancy not.

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"My dear Philip, you are right. I see it—I don't dispute it; but when a thing becomes personal, you know philosopher becomes difficult. I have such letters from poor dear Adeliza—such letters! Of course she thinks it is all my fault, and I believe she will break entirely with me. It is so very shocking. You see all Belgravians coupled their names, and the very day that he went off to Cowes in that heartless, abominable manner, if an announcement of the alliance as arranged did not positively appear in the *Court Circular*. It did indeed! I am sure Anne Hautton was at the bottom of it; it would be just like her. Perhaps poor Valencia cannot be pitied after her treatment of Cardonnel, but it is very hard on me."

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"He must speak definitely to-morrow," thought Lady Marabout. But the larvae of to-morrow burst into the butterfly of to-day, and to-day passed into the chrysalis of yesterday, and Goodwood was always very nearly caught, and never quite.

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And Lady Marabout floated up the staircase, but signed to her footman to open the door, not of the drawing-room, but of her own boudoir.

"The Potter is in my own room, Philip; you must come in here if you wish to see it," said that adroit lady, for the benefit of Soames. But when the door was shut, Lady Marabout lowered her voice confidentially: "The Potter isn't here, dear; I had it hung in the little cabinet through the drawing-rooms, but I don't wish to go up there for a few moments—you understand?"

Carruthers threw himself in a chair, and laughed till the dogs Bijou, Bonbon, and Pandore all barked in a furious concert.

"I understand! So Goody's positively coming to the point up there, is he?"

"No doubt he is," said Lady Marabout, reprovingly. "Why else should he come in when I was not at home? There is nothing extraordinary in it. The only thing I have wondered at is his having delayed so long."

"If a man had to hang himself, would you wonder he put off pulling the bolt?"

"I don't see any point in your jests at all!" returned Lady Marabout. "There is nothing ridiculous in winning such a girl as Valencia."

"No; but the question here is not of winning her, but of buying her. The price is a little high—a ducal coronet and splendid settlements, a wedding-ring and bondage for life; but he will buy her, nevertheless. Cardonnel couldn't pay the first half of the price, and so he was swept out of the auction-room. You are shocked, mother? Ah, truth is shocking sometimes, and always *maladroit*. one oughtn't to bring it into ladies' boudoirs."

"Hold your tongue, Philip! I will not have you so satirical. Where do you take it from? Not from me I am sure! Hark! there is Goodwood going! That is his step on the stairs, I think! Dear me, Philip, I wish you sympathized with me a little more, for I do feel happy, and I can't help it; dear Adeliza will be so gratified."

"My dear mother, I'll do my best to be sympathetic, I'll go and congratulate Goodwood as he gets in his cab, if you fancy I ought; but, you see, if I were in Dahomey beholding the head of my best friend coming off, I couldn't quite get up the amount of sympathy in their pleasure at the refreshing sight the Dahomites might expect from me, and so—"

But Lady Marabout missed the comparison of herself to a Dahomite, for she had opened the door and was crossing to the drawing rooms, her eyes bright, her step elastic, her heart exultant at the triumph of her maneuvers. The Hon. Val was playing with some ferns in an etagere at the bottom of the farthest room, and responded to the kiss her aunt bestowed on her about as much as if she had been one of the statuettes on the consoles.

"Well, love, what did he say?" asked Lady Marabout, breathlessly, with eager delight and confident anticipation.

Like drops of ice on warm rose-leaves fell each word of the intensely chill and slightly sulky response on Lady Marabout's heart.

"He said that he goes to Cowes to-morrow for the Royal Yacht Squadron dinner, and then on in the *Anadyomene* to the Spitzbergen coast for walruses. He left a P. P. C. card for you."

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